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THE NEW YORKER

Feb. 14 & 21, 2005

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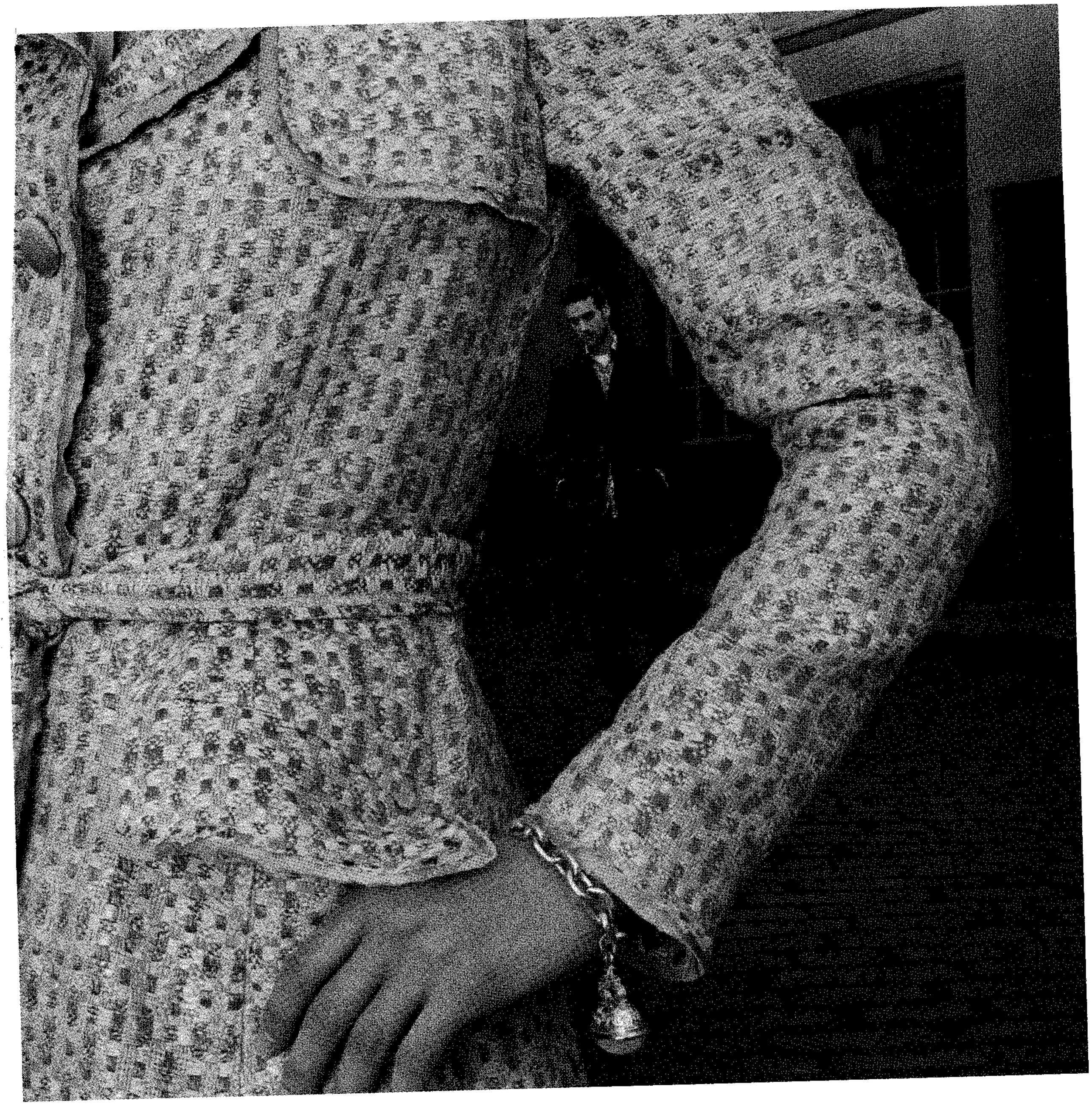
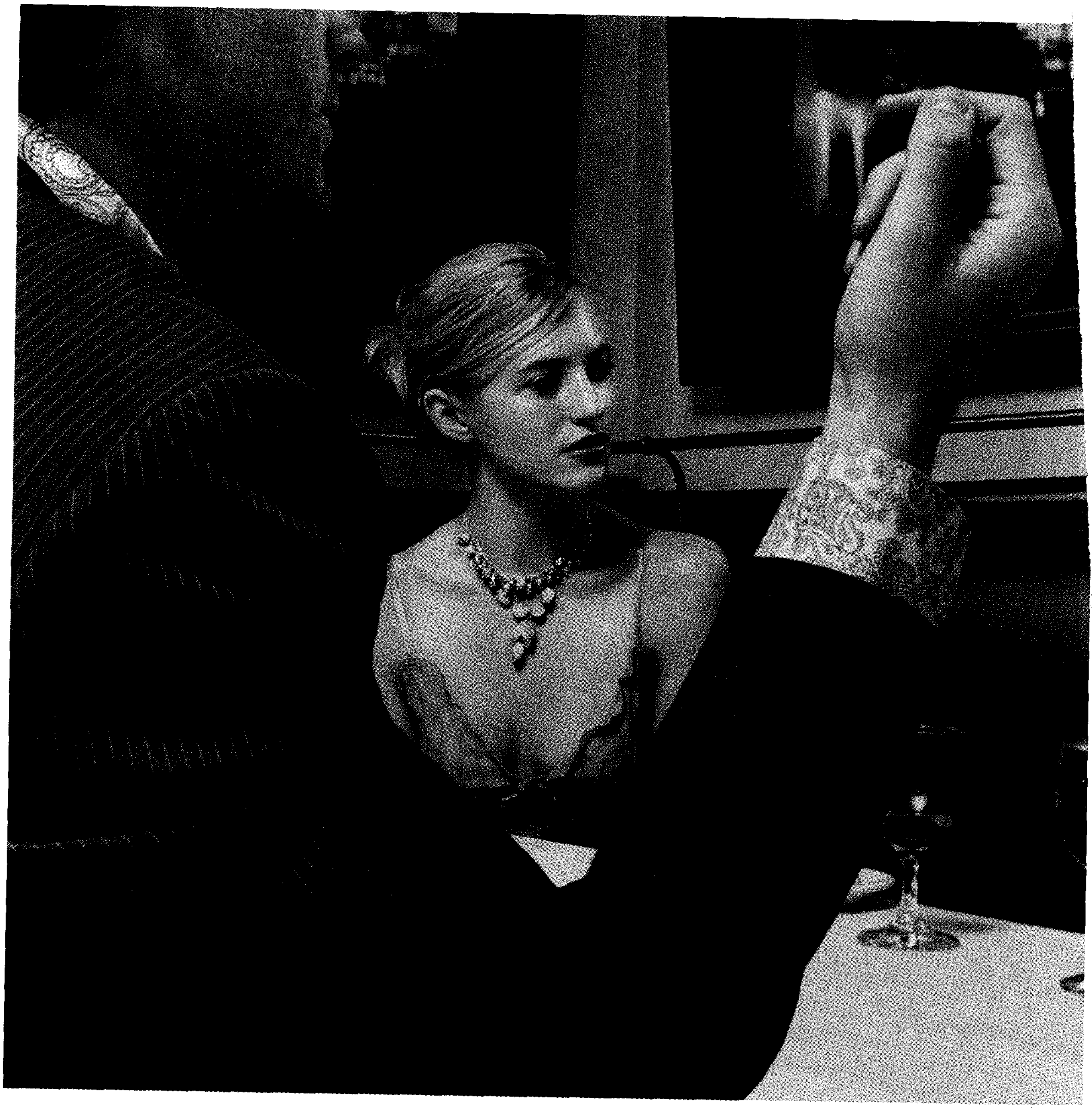
he wrote
were still in their luggage.



Matthew butchered the
entire French language,
and yet she agreed
to go out with him.



She always
secretly
liked his brother Edward.

How perfect.
Half a day went by
and still the car engine
wouldn't turn over.
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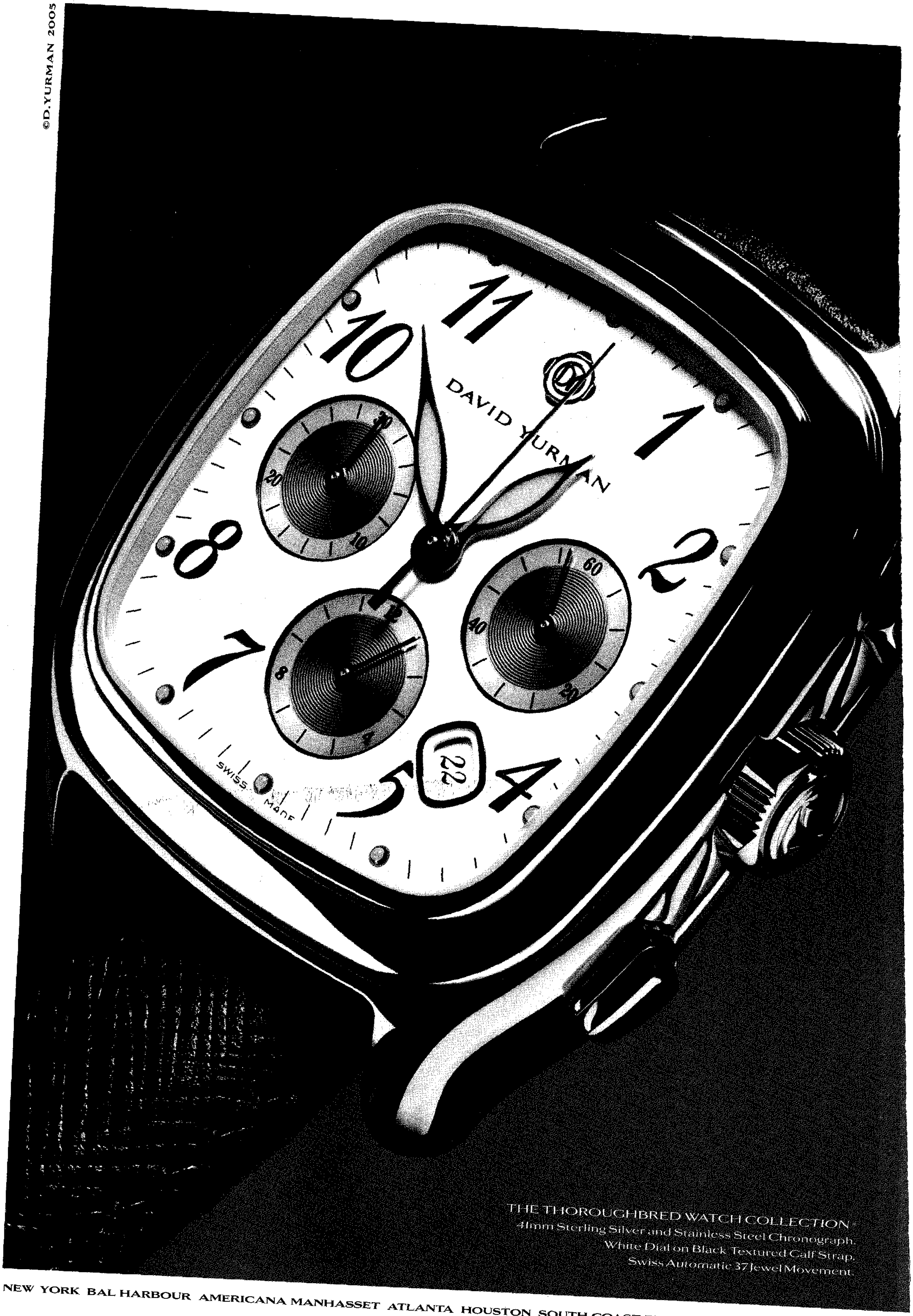

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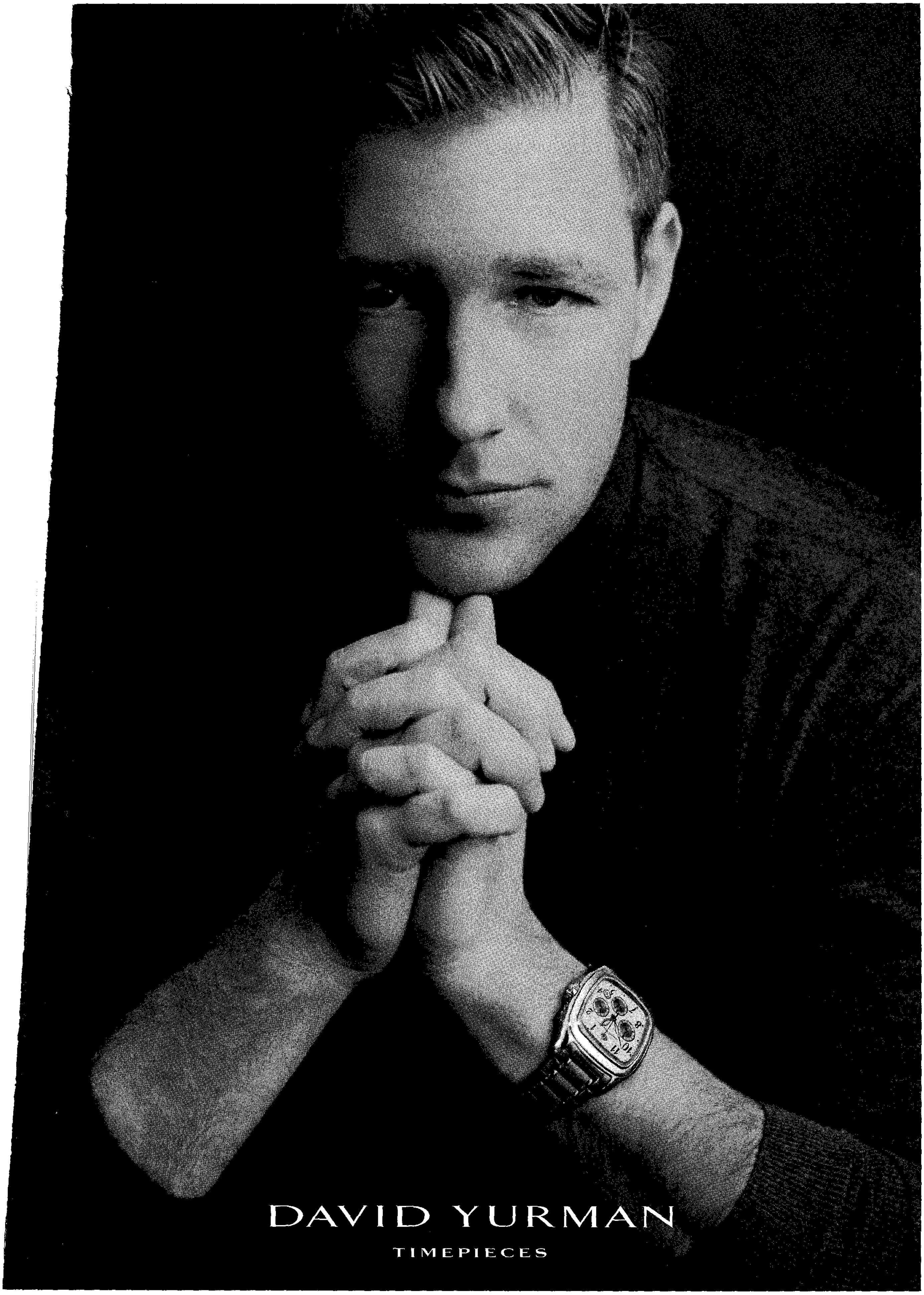
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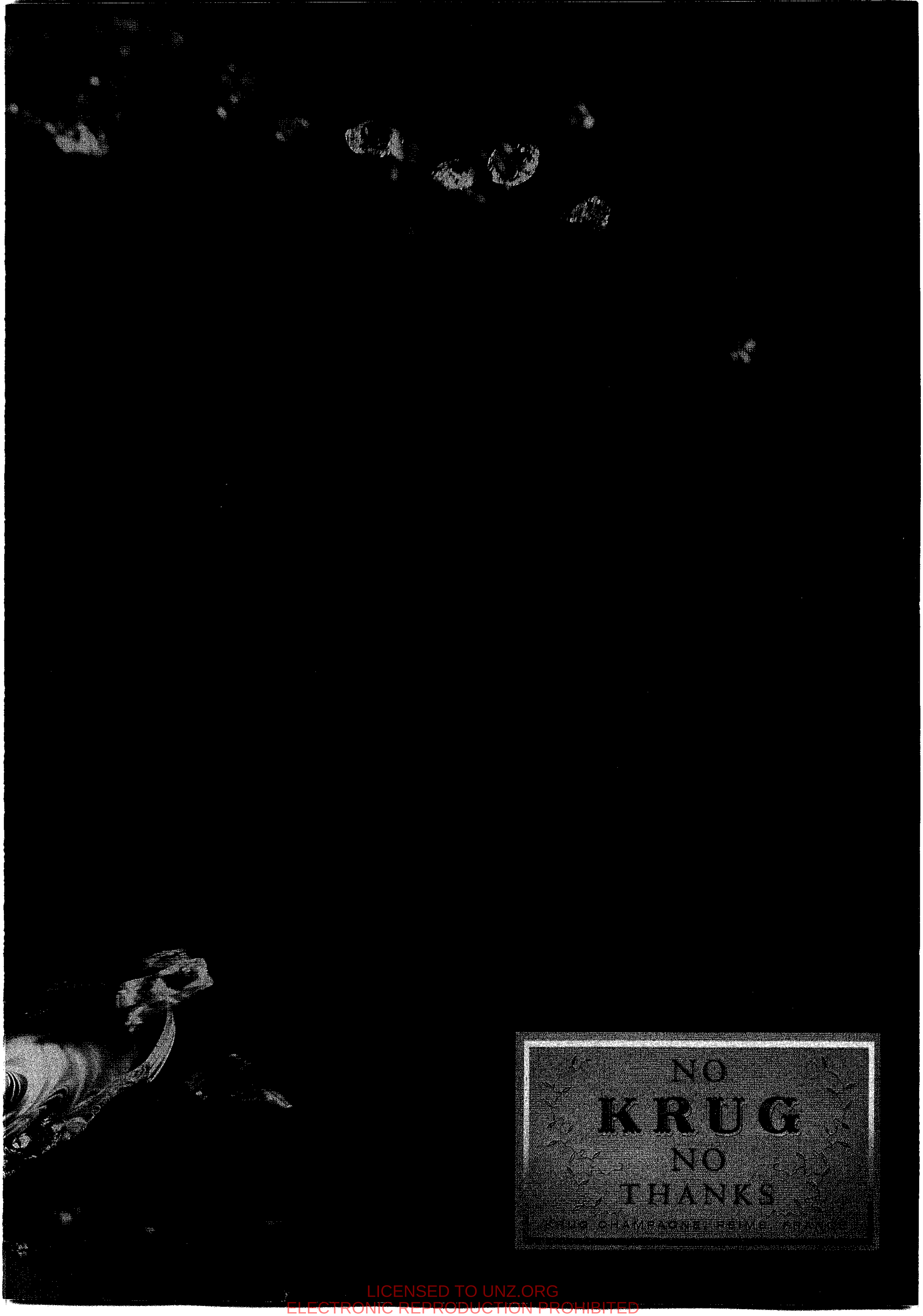
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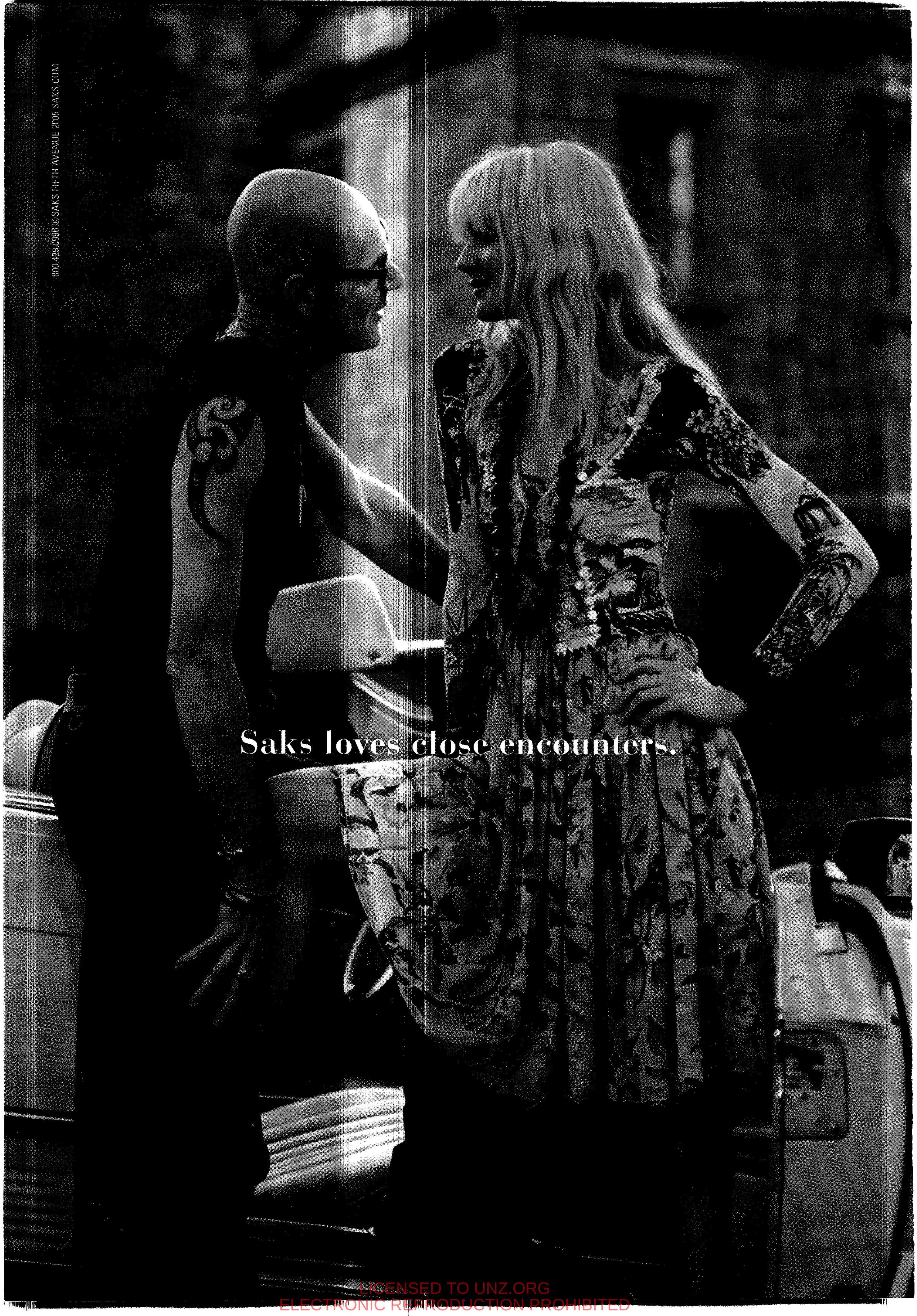
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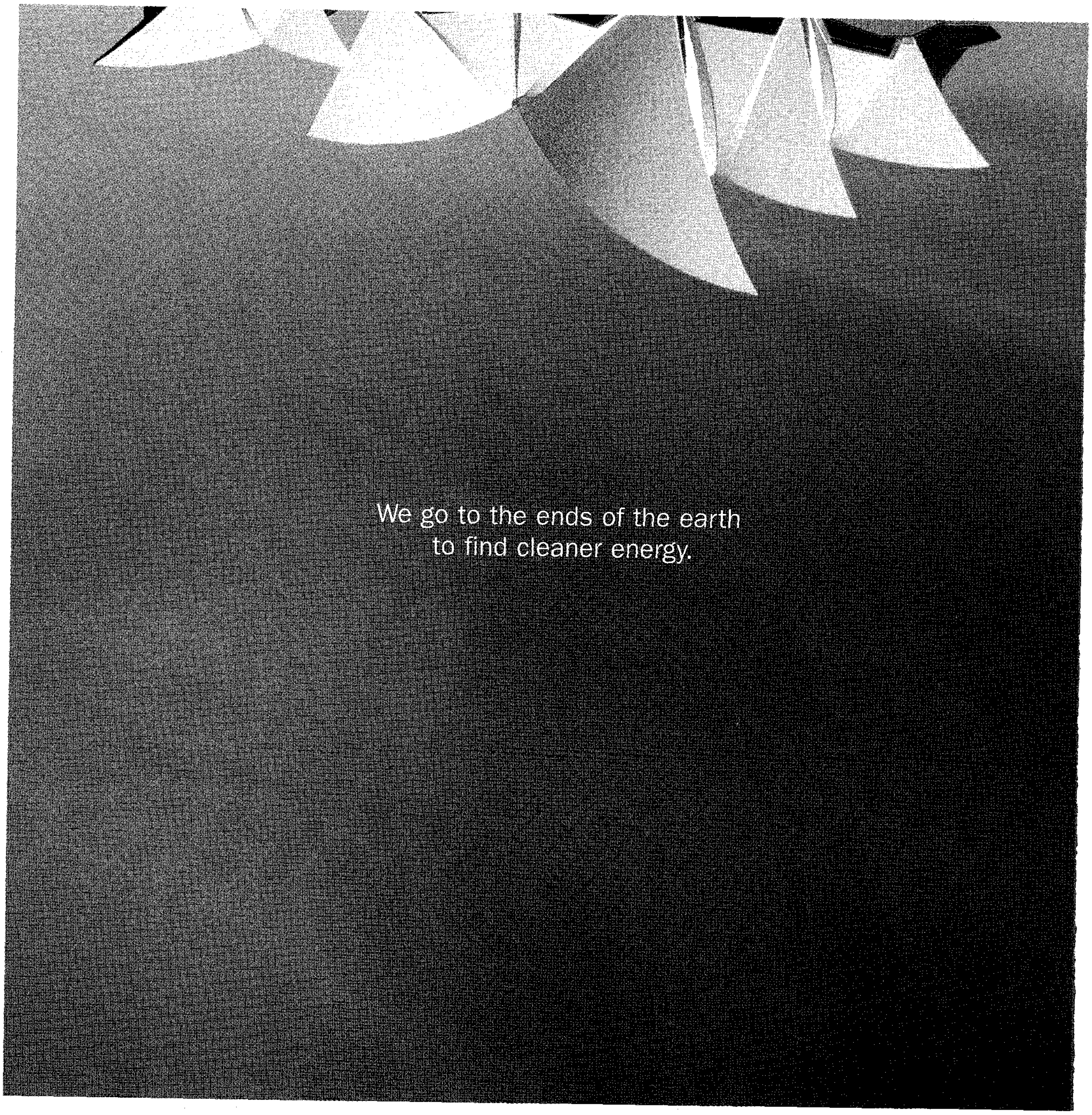
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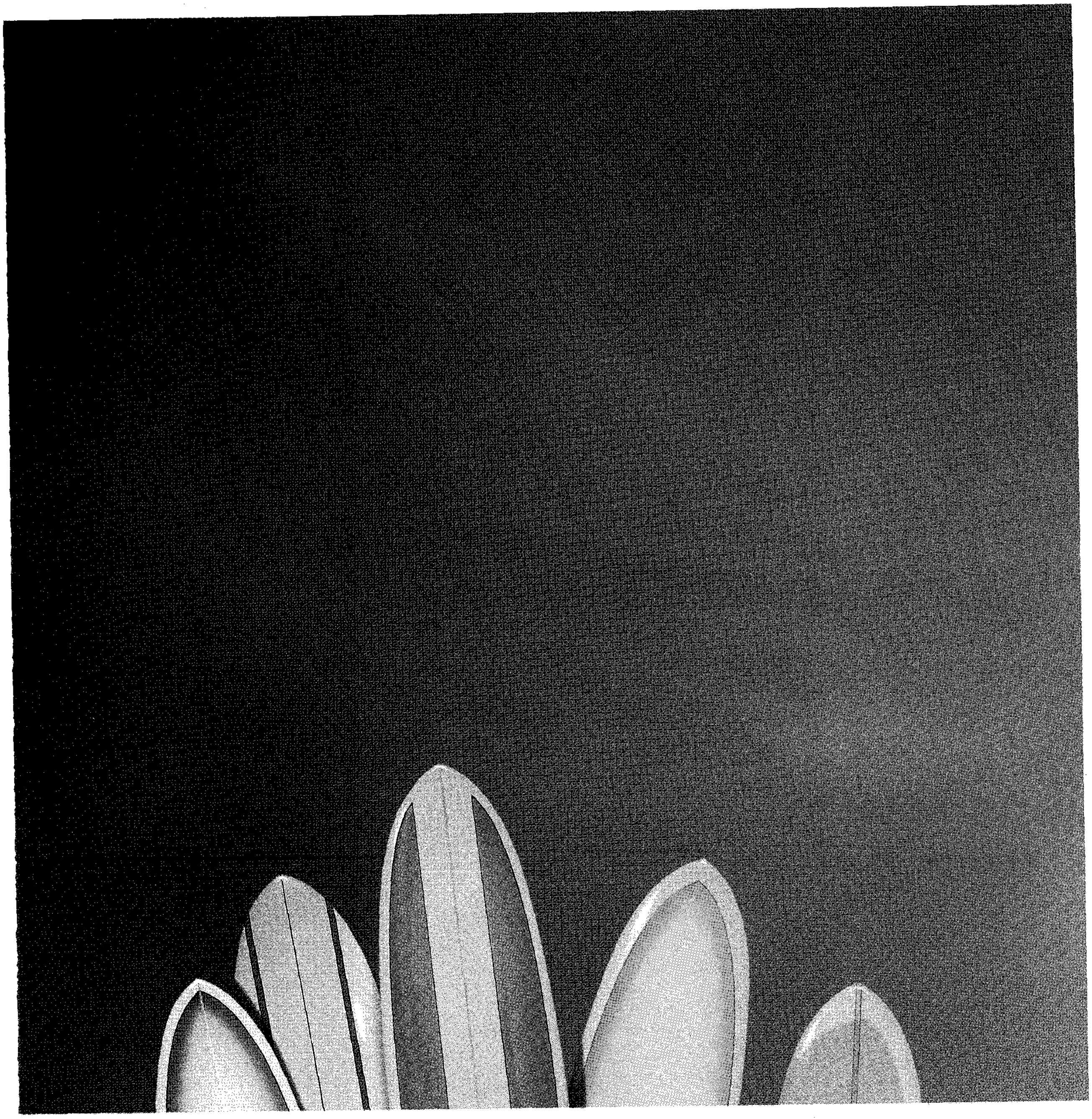

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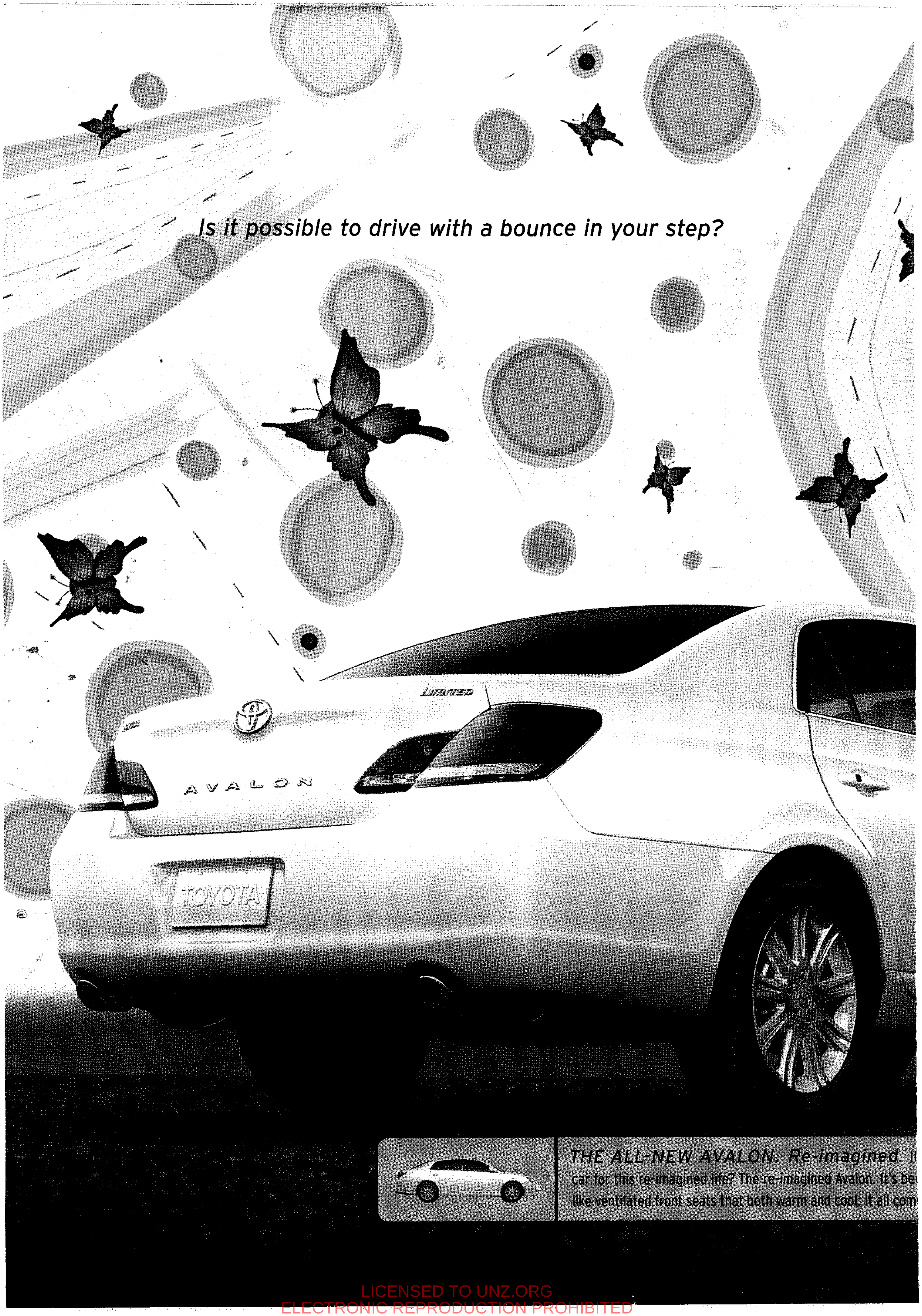
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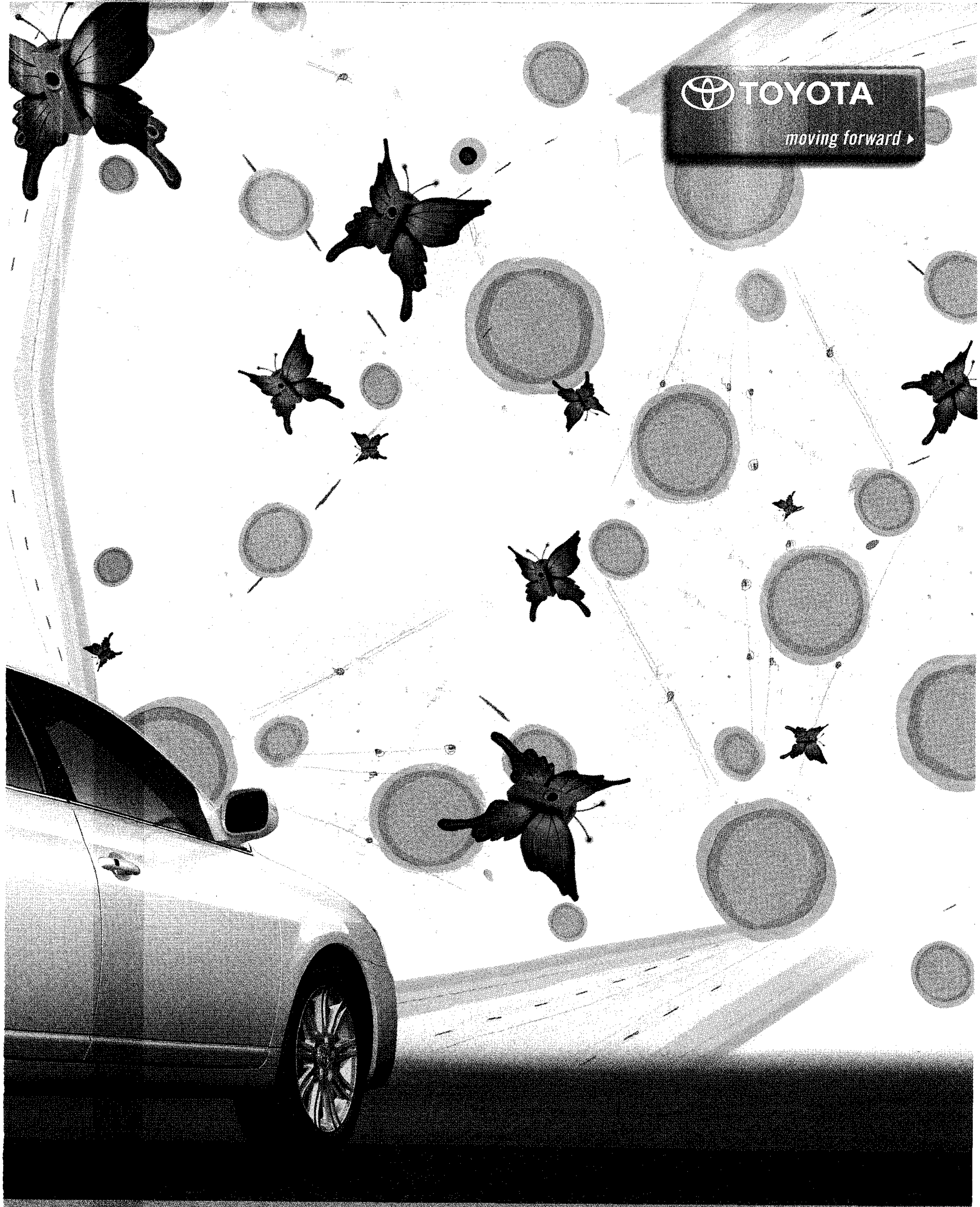

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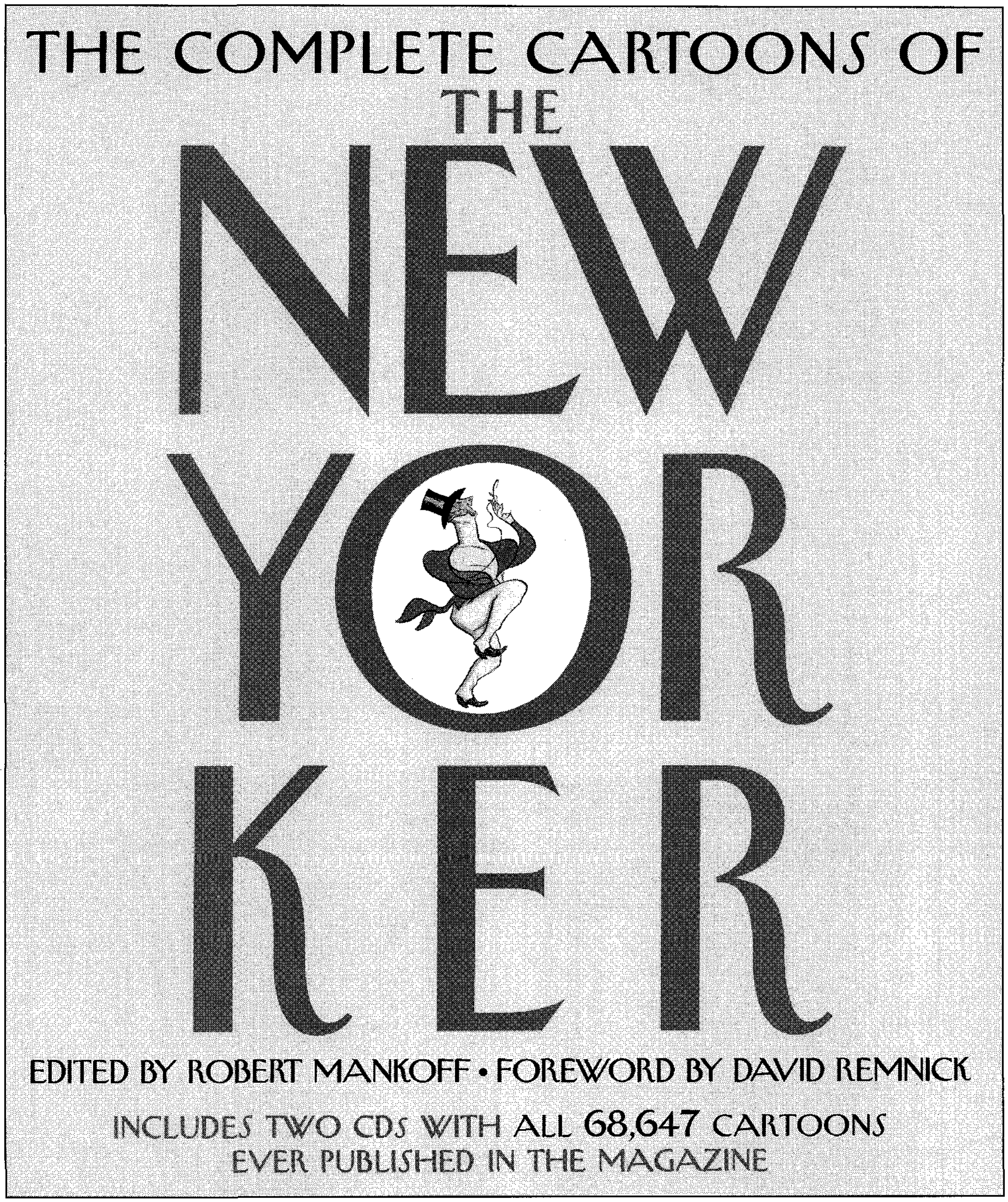

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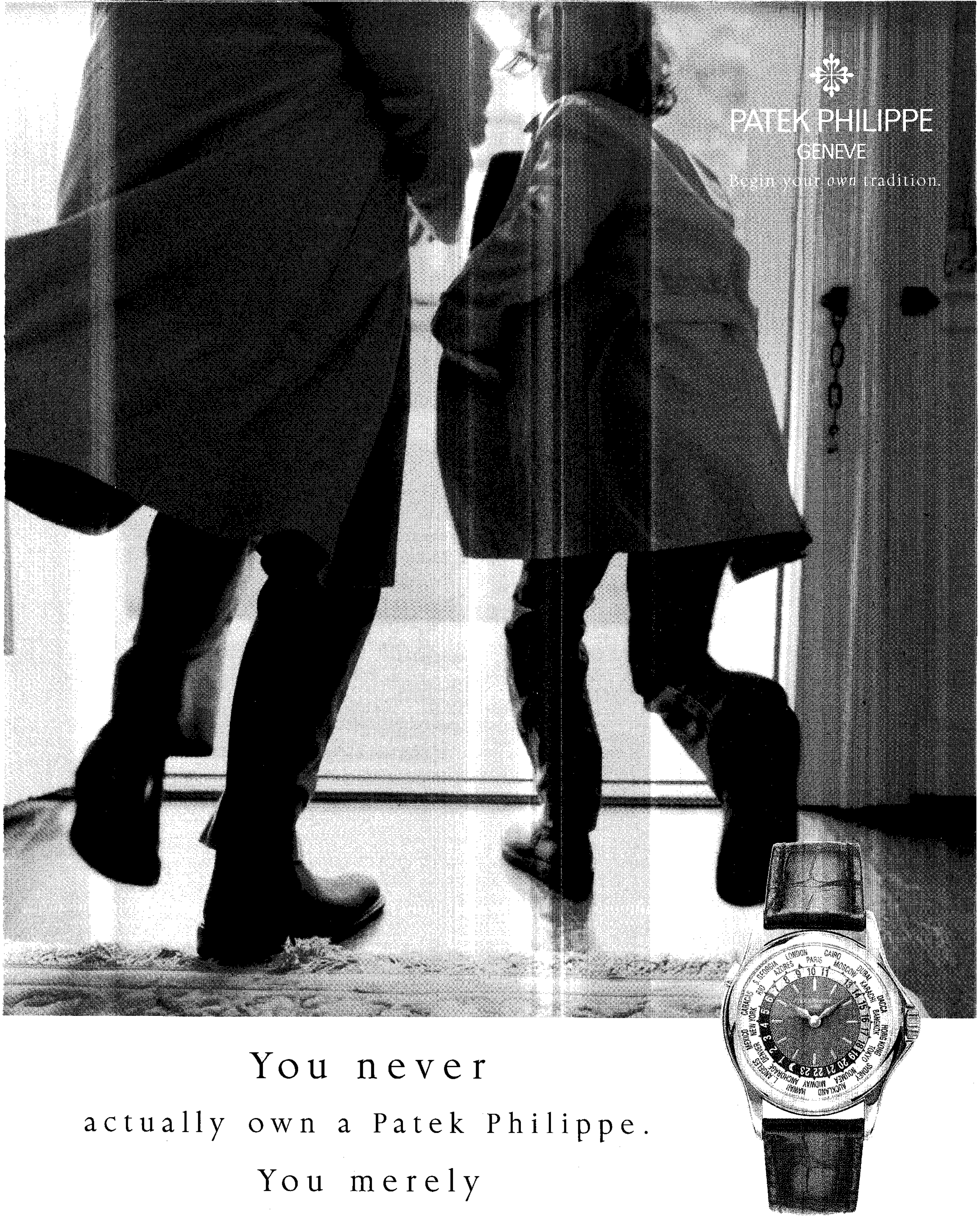
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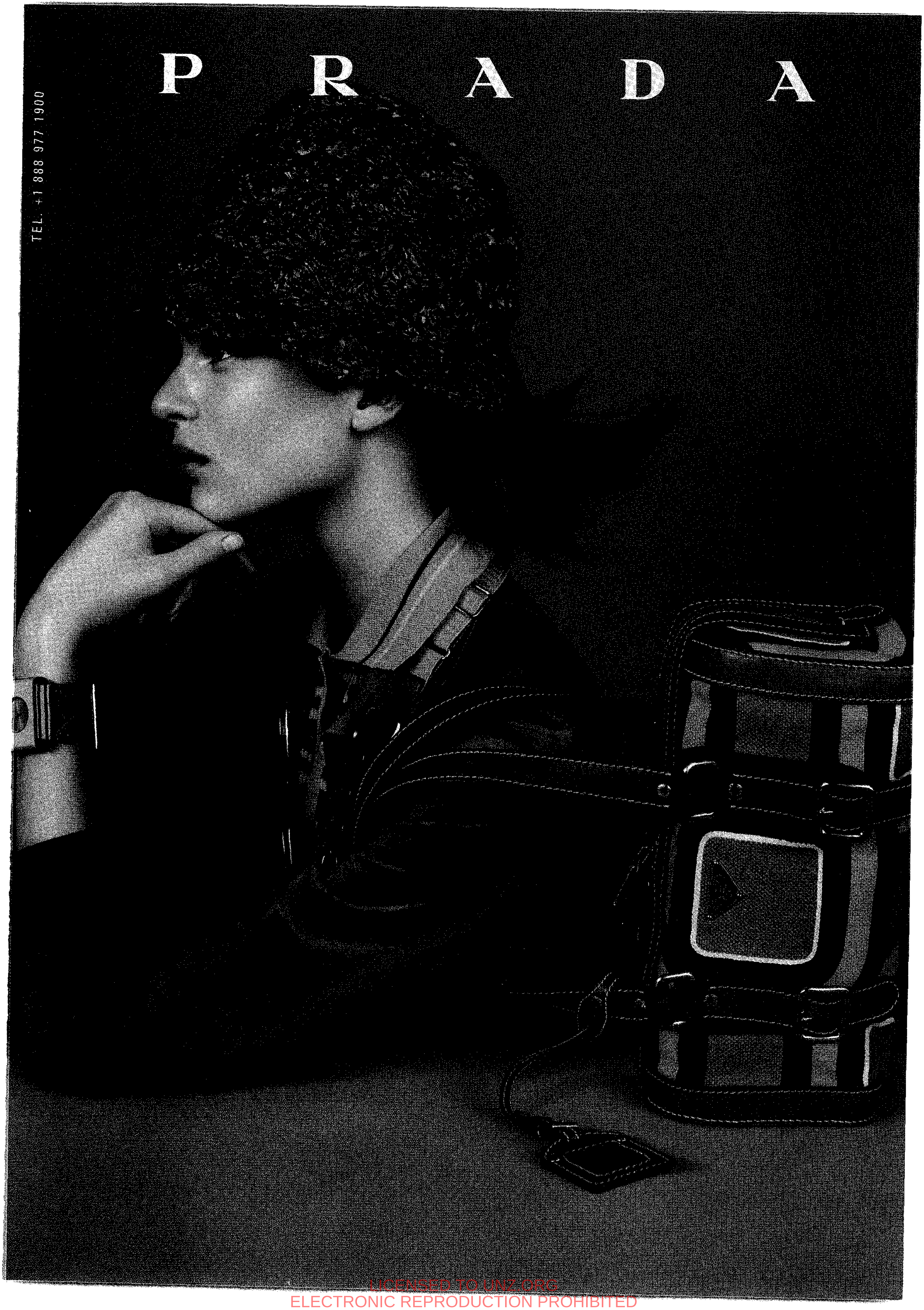
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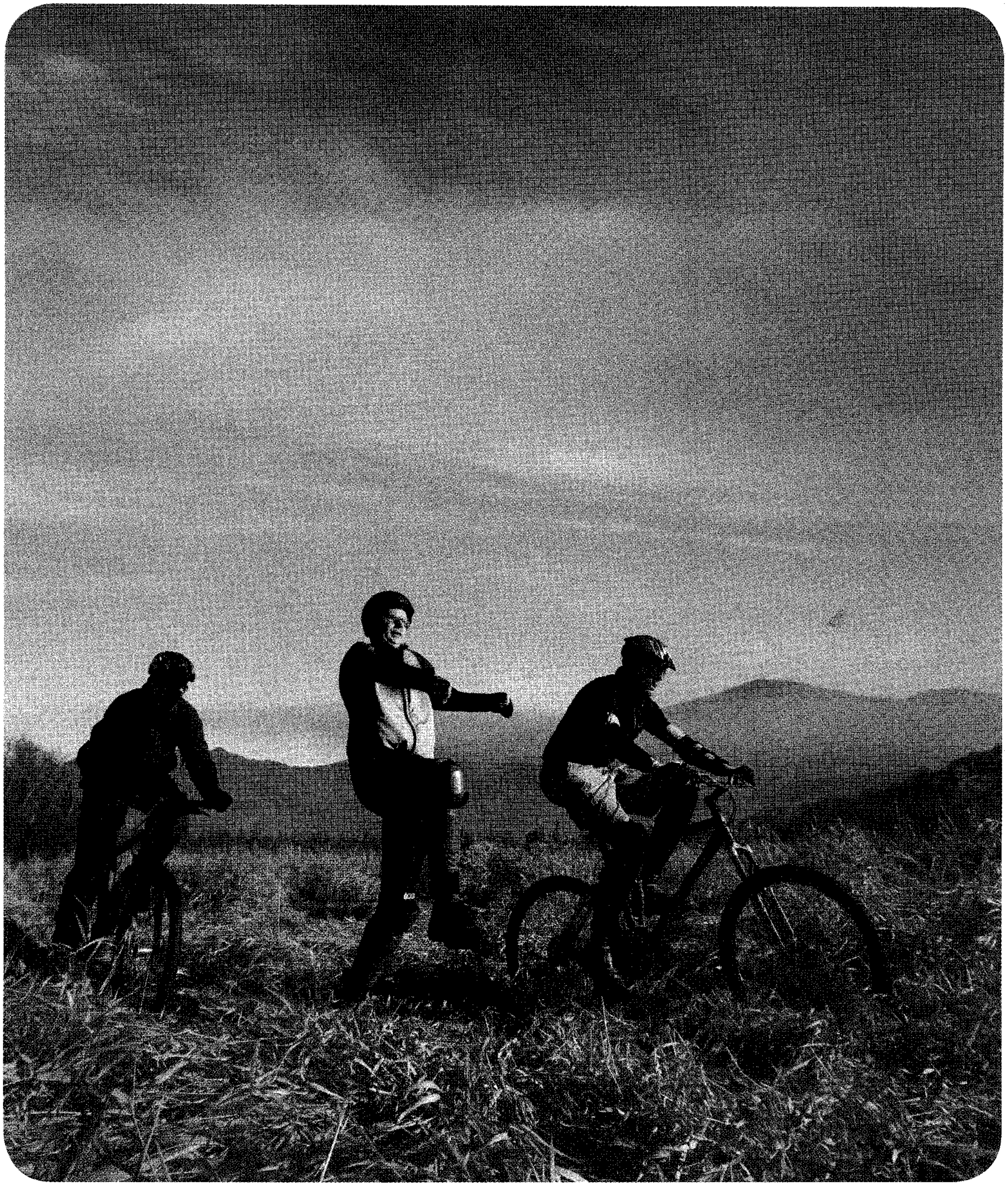

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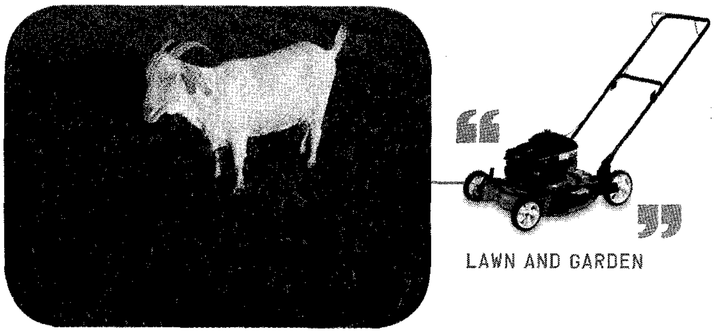

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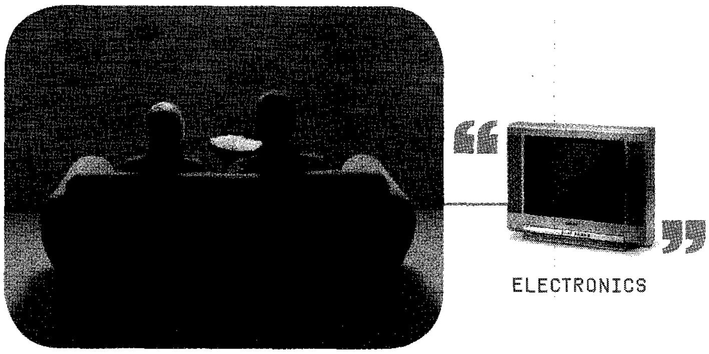

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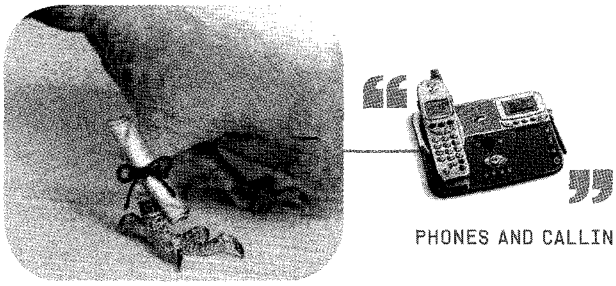

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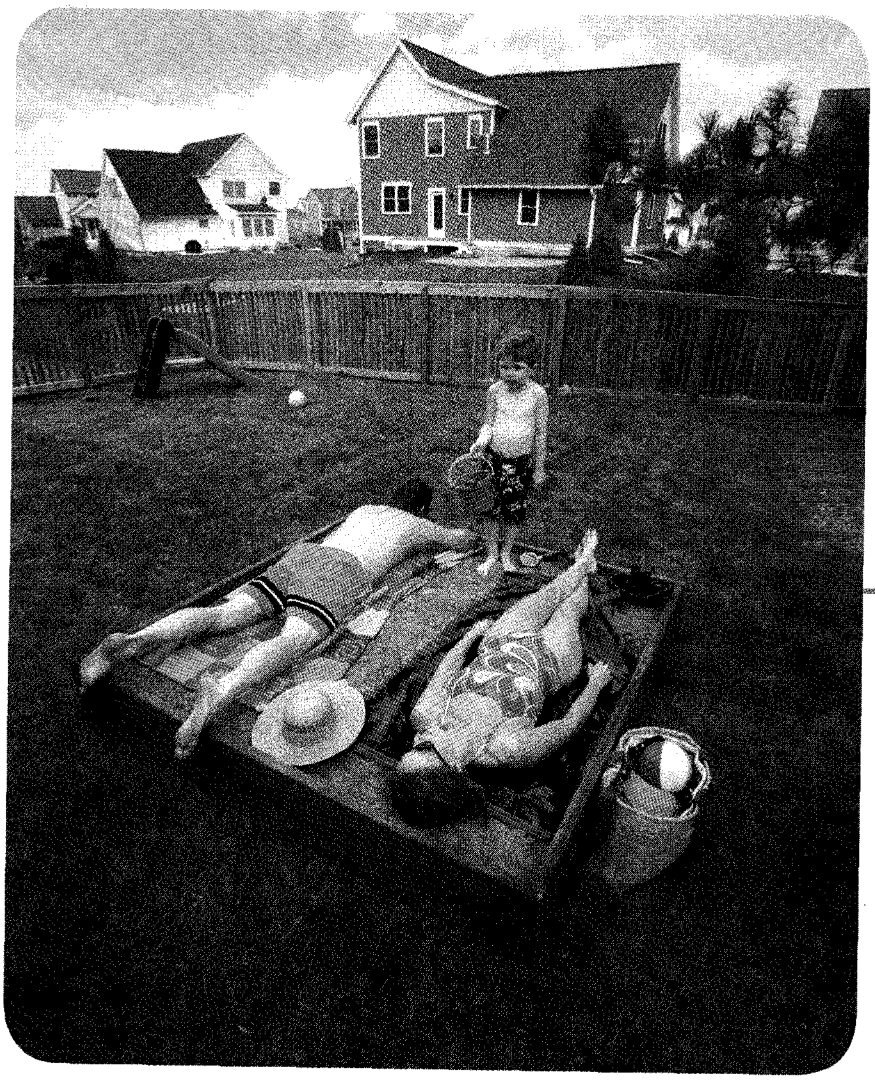

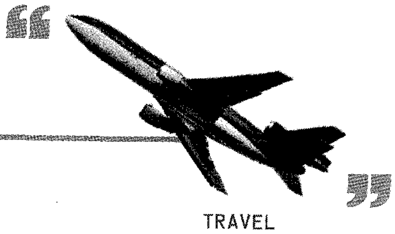

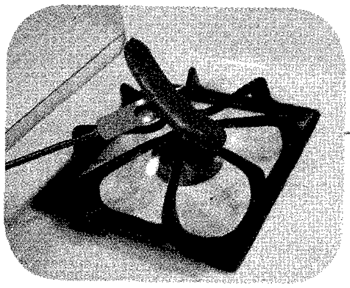

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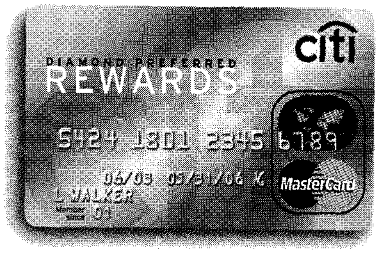
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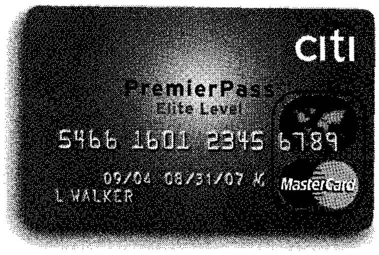
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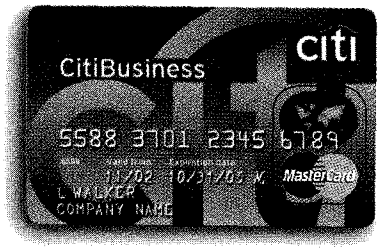
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"A Butterfly Flaps Its Wings . . ."

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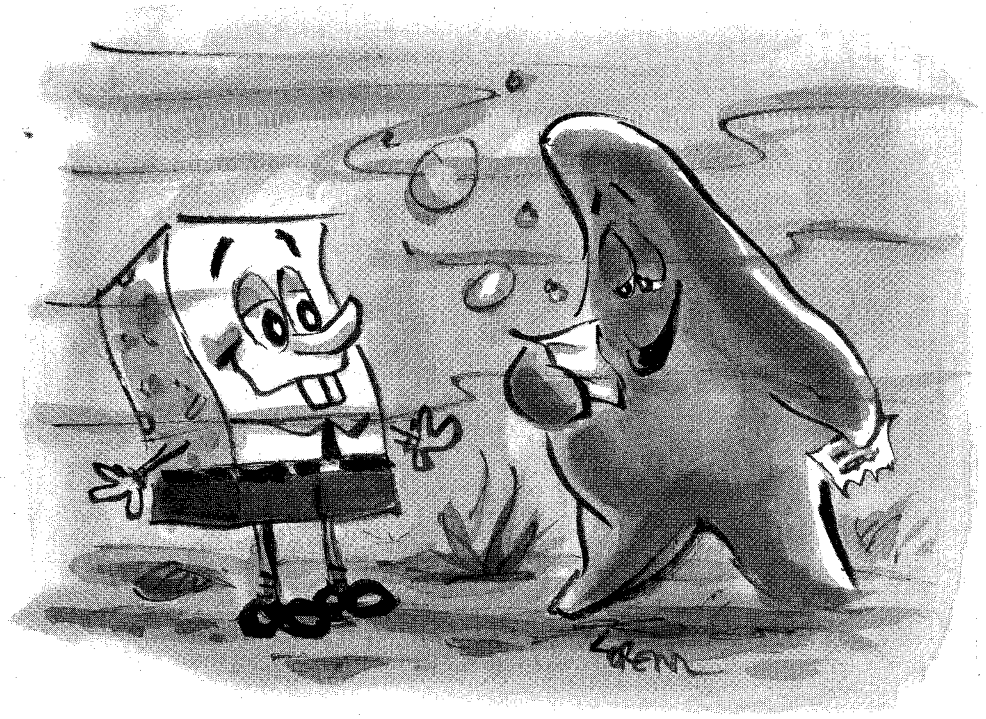
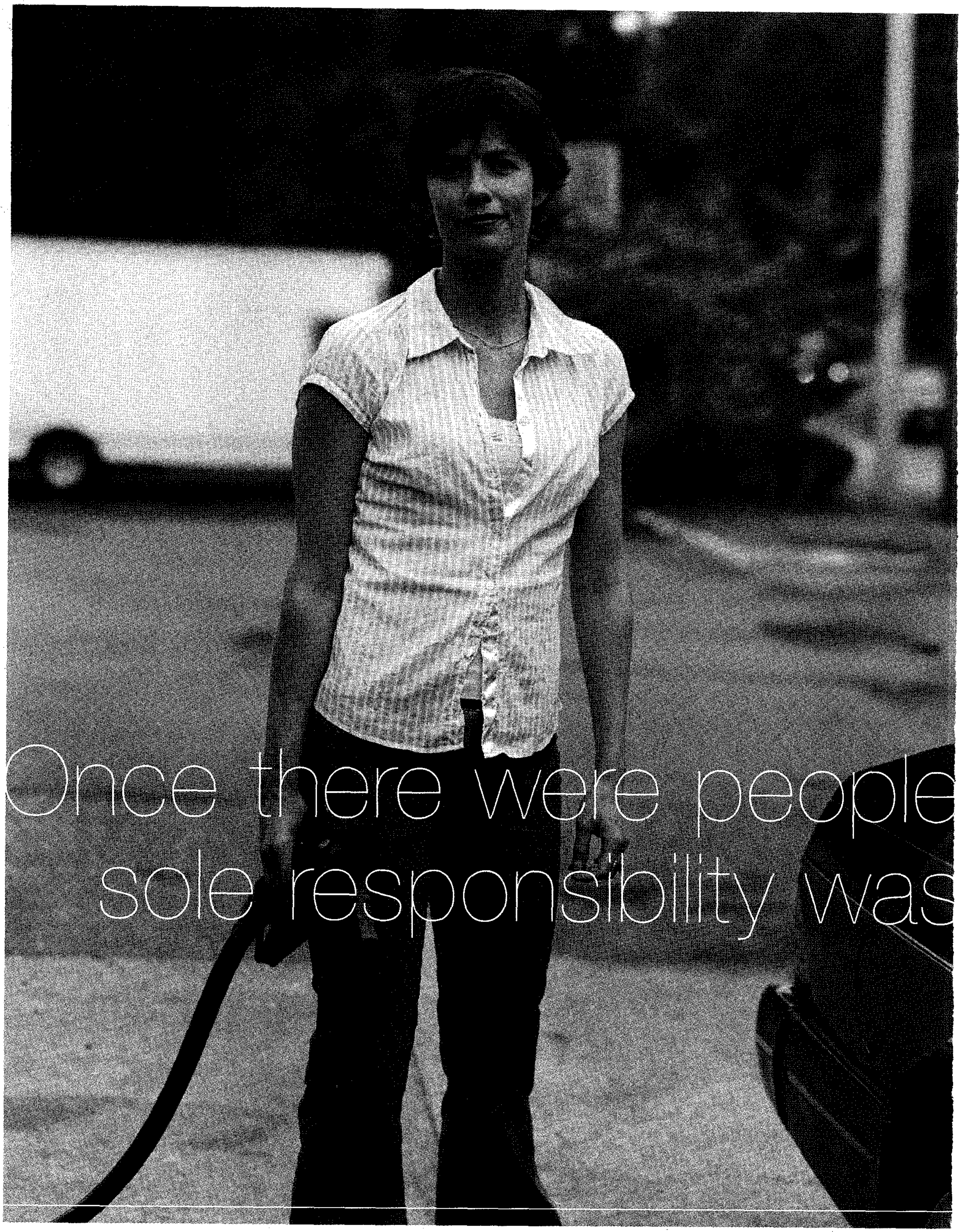


"It's a very sweet note from Batman and Robin."


Once there were people
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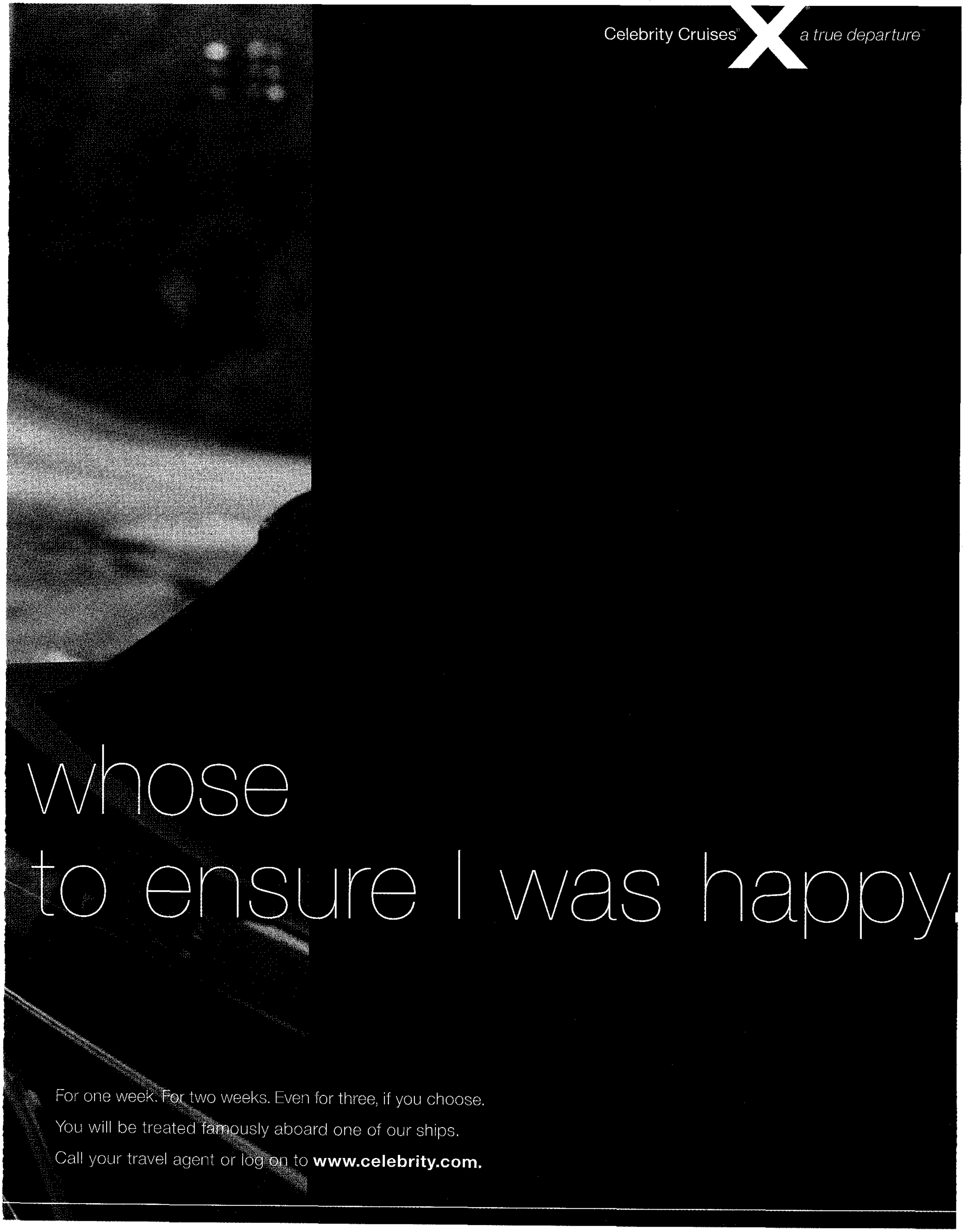
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jane Mayer ("Outsourcing Torture," p. 106) is a staff writer based in Washington, D.C. She is the co-author of two books, "Strange Justice" and "Landslide."

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 95) is a senior editor and a staff writer. His book "Politics: Observations & Arguments, 1966-2004" came out last summer.

Rebecca Mead (The Talk of the Town, p. 100) has been writing for the magazine since 1997.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 104) writes about business and finance. "The Wisdom of Crowds" is his first book.

Roger Angell ("Andy," p. 132) has been a contributor since 1944 and a fiction editor since 1956. His most recent book is "Game Time."

John Kenney (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 150) has just completed his first novel.

Burkhard Bilger ("Sole Survivor," p. 152) is the author of "Noodling for Flatheads."

Nicholas Lemann ("Fear and Favor," p. 168) is the dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and a staff writer.

Susan Orlean ("Lost Dog," p. 182) has been writing for the magazine since 1987. A collection of her pieces, "My Kind of Place: Travel Stories from a Woman Who's Been Everywhere," came out in September.

Richard McGuire (Spot drawings throughout) currently lives in Paris and is directing an animated film.

Jorie Graham (Poem, p. 202) is the author of ten poetry collections, including "Never" and "Overlord," which will be published next month.

Edward Sorel ("Literary Fashion," p. 226) has an exhibition of his satiric drawings at the Willy-Brandt-Haus, in Berlin.

Chris Ware (Cover) is working on two graphic novels. A collection of his gag cartoons, "The Acme Novelty Library," comes out this summer.

Mark Singer ("The Misfit," p. 192) is the author of five books. "Character Studies: Encounters with the Curiously Obsessed" will be published in July.

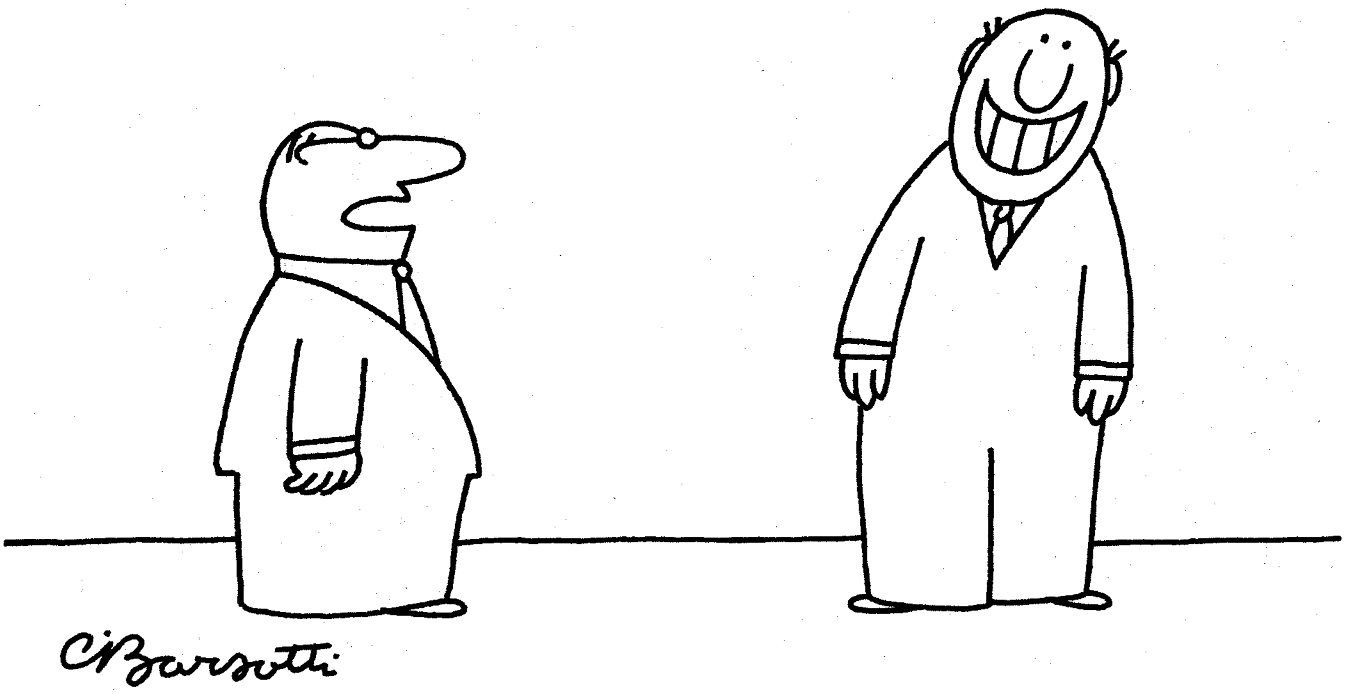
Richard Preston ("Climbing the Redwoods," p. 212) has written several books, including "The Hot Zone" and "The Demon in the Freezer." He is at work on a book about climbing the world's tallest trees.

Charles D'Ambrosio (Fiction, p. 228) is the author of "The Point: And Other Stories." He lives in Portland, Oregon.

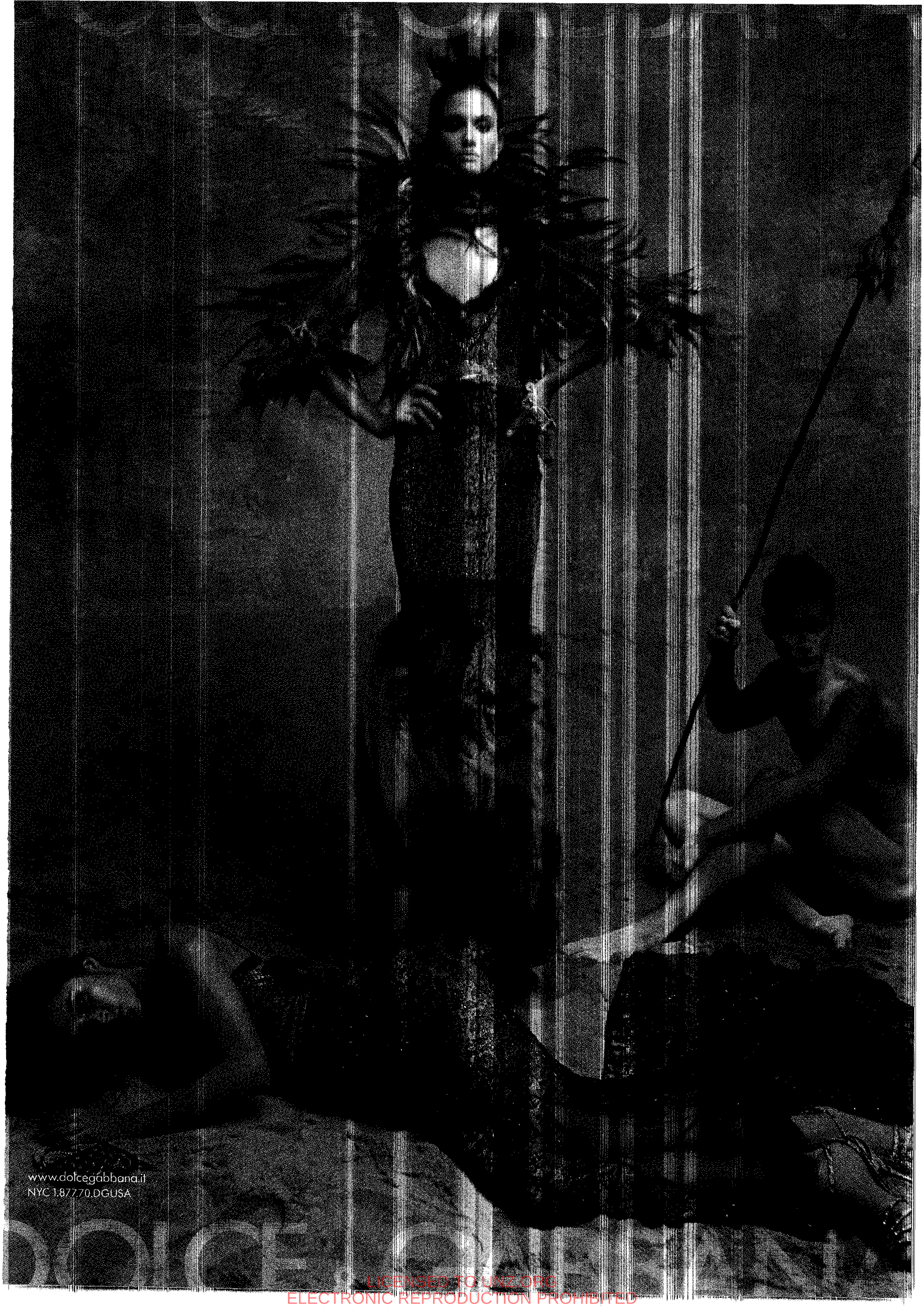
Joan Acocella (Books, p. 242) is a dance and literary critic for the magazine.

Alex Ross (Musical Events, p. 254) won a 2004 ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for his *New Yorker* piece "Ghost Sonata."

Saul Steinberg (The Back Page, p. 262) is the subject of a new book, "Steinberg at *The New Yorker*," by Joel Smith, with an introduction by Ian Frazier, which chronicles the artist's nearly six decades of work for the magazine. ♦



"Very good. Now go out there and convince the others."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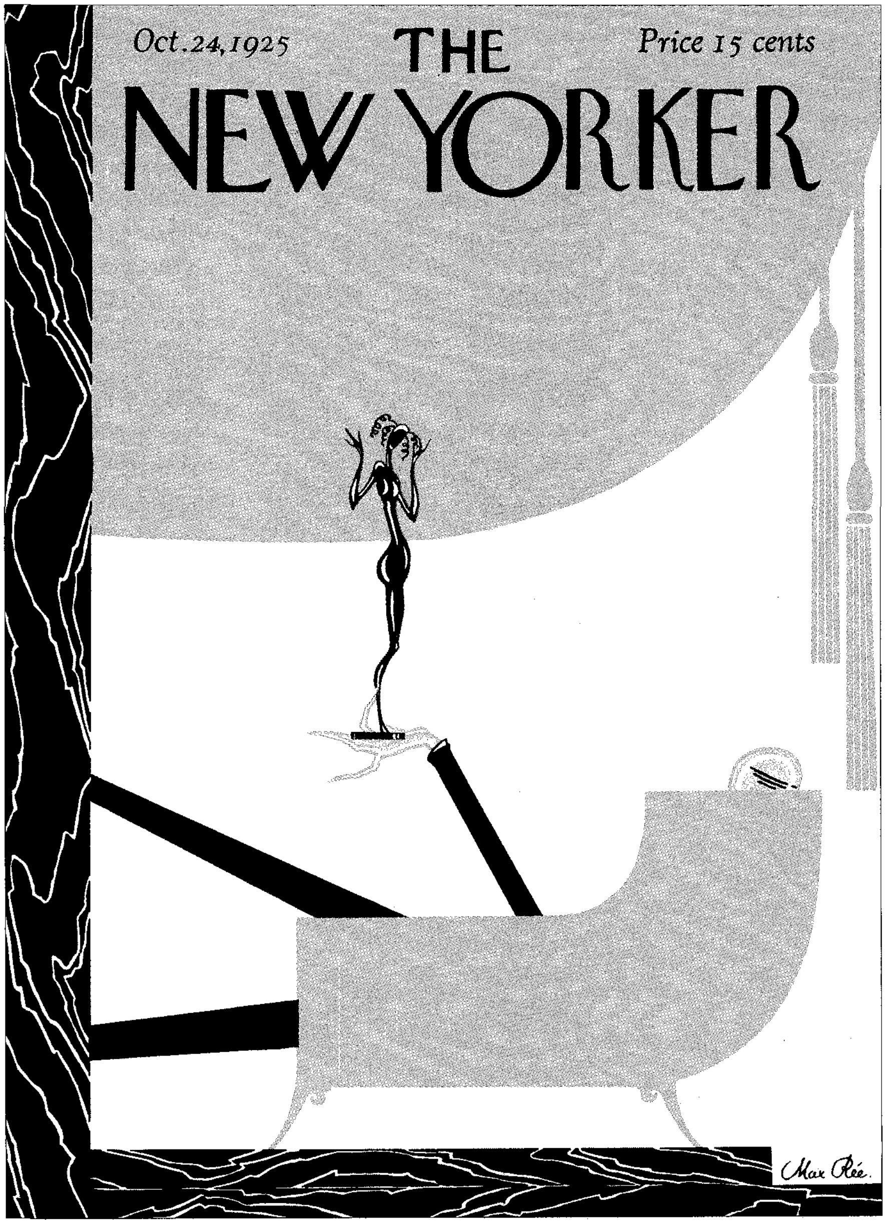
COVER STORIES

ART APPRECIATION

Art may not have been the first topic addressed on the cover of *The New Yorker* when it was launched, in February of 1925, and it may not have been the second, but it finally appeared—after butterflies, flappers, New York City's skyline, music halls, golf, dancing, water skiing, foxhunting, horse races, and tennis—in Max Rée's October image of an art lover holding a statuette. Actually, all *New Yorker* covers are about art: each one (and there have been 4,109 over the past eighty years) has been drawn by an artist working in a particular style. Max Rée, for example, uses the geometric shapes and the limited palette of Art Deco to make a humorous point about the relationship of art and art lovers. The man is as rigid as the woman is sinuous; the only part of him that seems alive is where the two of them come into contact. Peter Arno's 1928 cover, with its stereotypical Asian servant, also evokes the sense of excitement, as it were, that one gets from art, and in 1998 Ian Falconer gives the topic a slightly different spin, while Charles E. Martin's 1961 cover captures only the innocent enthusiasm of children.

Saul Steinberg is the magazine's su-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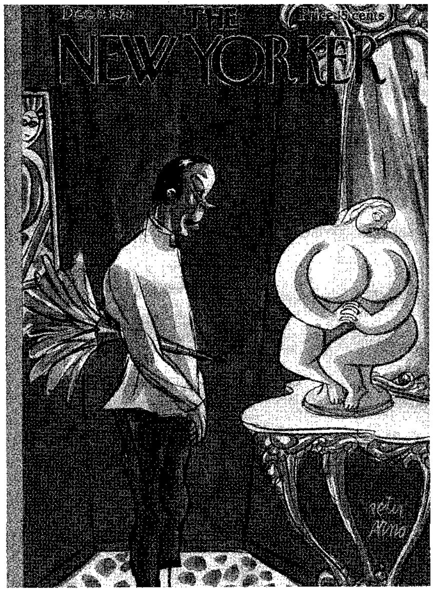
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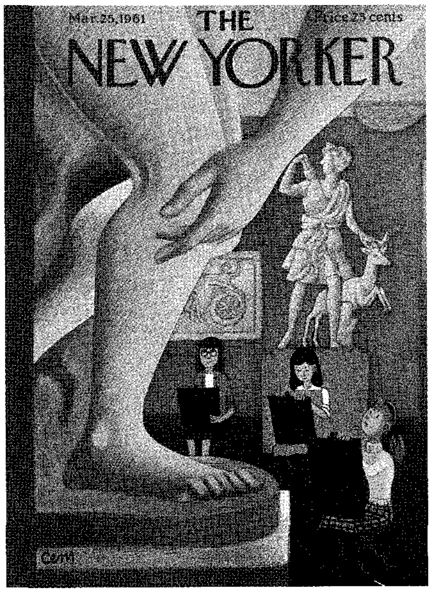
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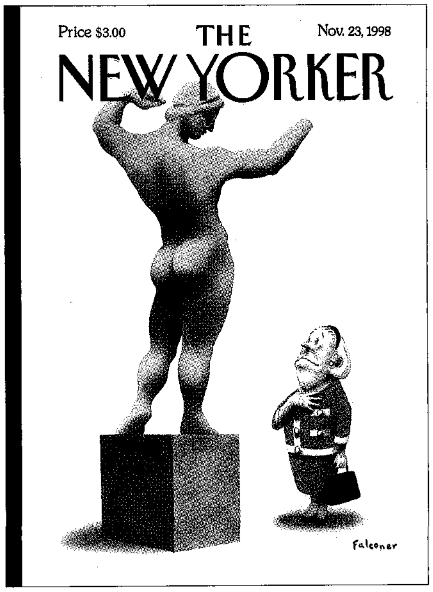
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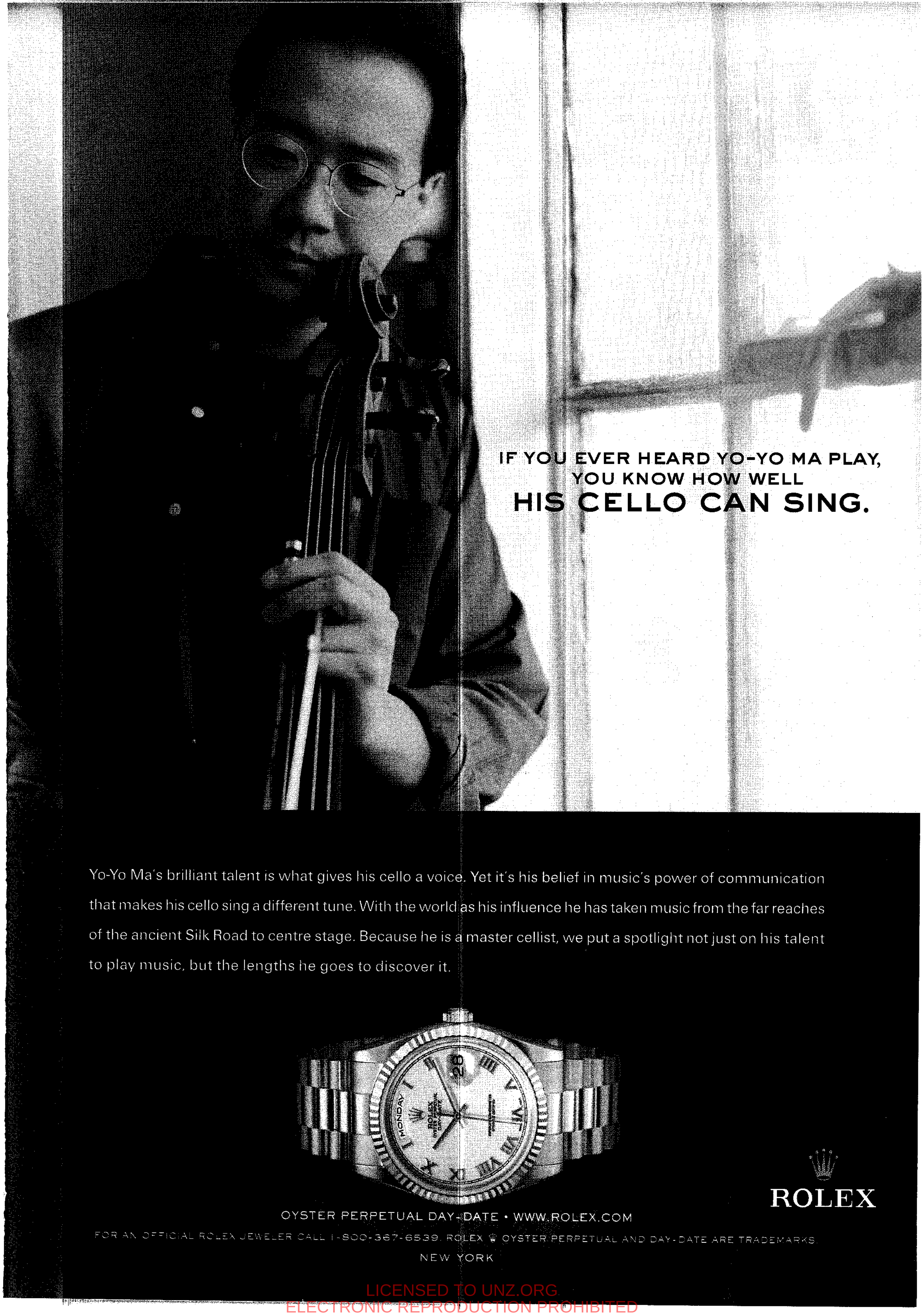

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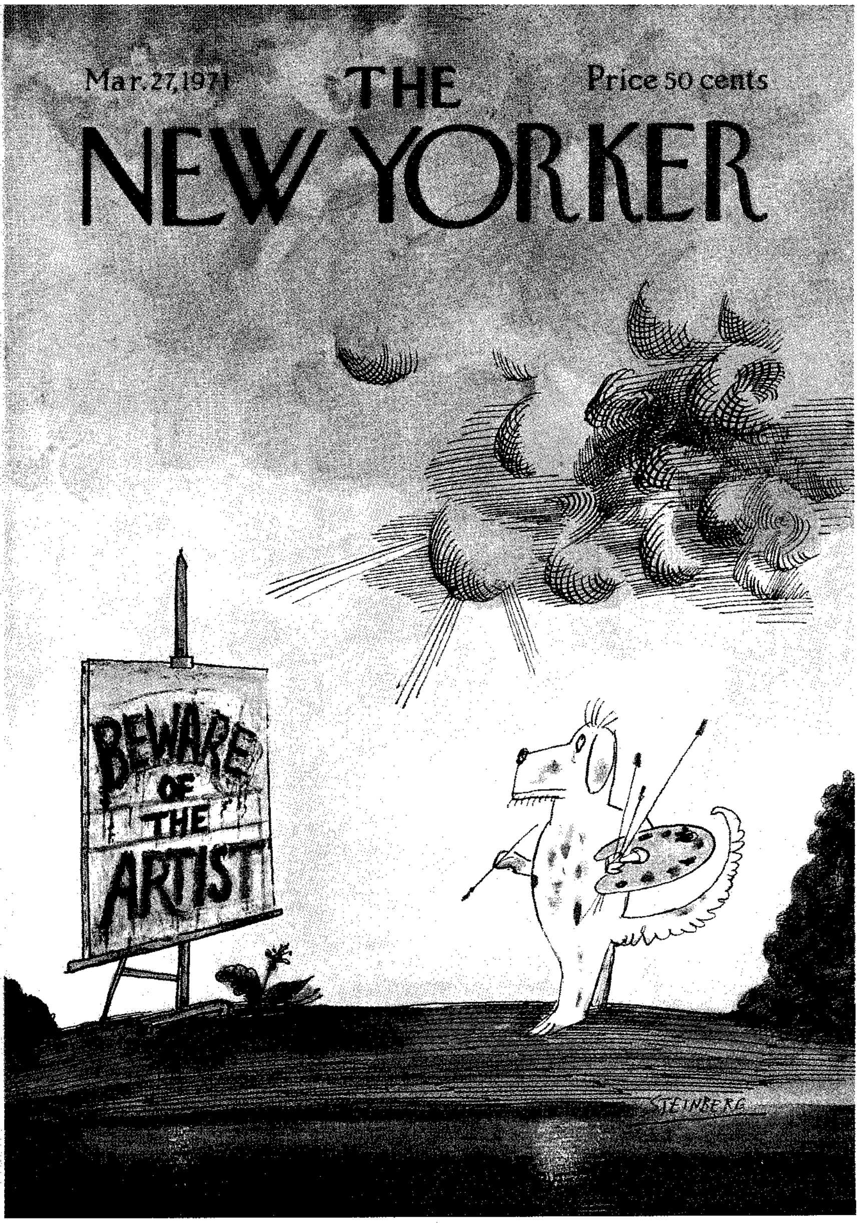
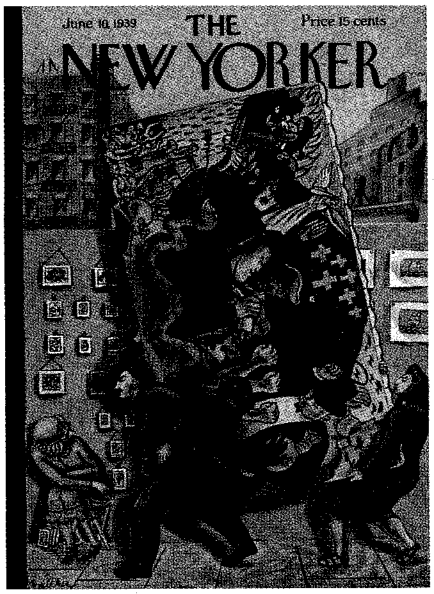
preme artist, the illustrator who turned every cover he touched into a resonant, inspired work. In 1971, Steinberg warns us to beware of the artist, who will not hesitate to use every tool at his disposal—watercolor, gouache, pen, even colored pencil. A year later, Steinberg plays on the differences between words and pictures, making art and paradox from the most basic colors and shapes, neatly reversing red and blue, yellow and green. Beware of the artist, indeed. In a 1939 cover by Virginia Snedeker, Greenwich Village artists attempt to remake the world; in reality, the Village artist's life more closely resembled the illustration by Helen Hokinson for a 1937 cover. A number of covers show artists at work, though the crusty fisherman in the foreground of a 2003 cover by Carter Goodrich would clearly prefer not to be in the picture at all. Bruce Eric Kaplan, in 2004, shows an artist pouring himself into his work; Rea Irvin, in 1939, imagines a more delicate relationship between creator and subject; and in a 1990 cover by William Steig, one of a few self-portraits he did for the cover, the painter seems to be the painted as well. In 2002, Benoît van Innis's godlike artist puts finishing touches on the fall foliage; a year later, nature is admired over man-made art.

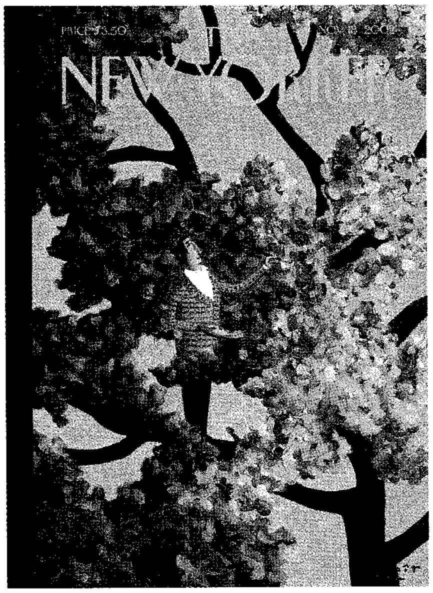
Artists also like to look at people looking at art. In Vladimir Bobritsky's 1930 gallery scene, the visitors are aesthetes dressed to the nines; in a 1938 scene by Christina Malman, they are stick figures



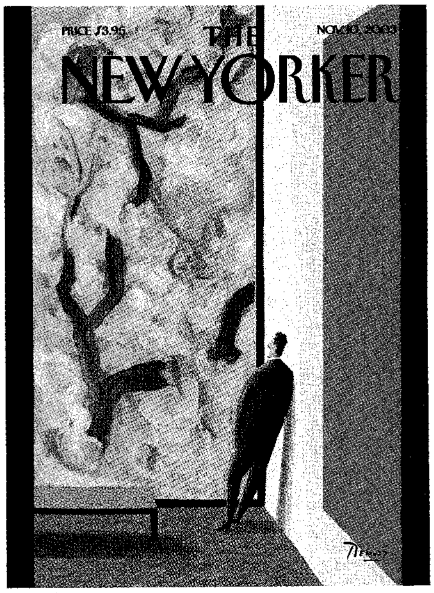
SAUL STEINBERG, MARCH 27, 1971



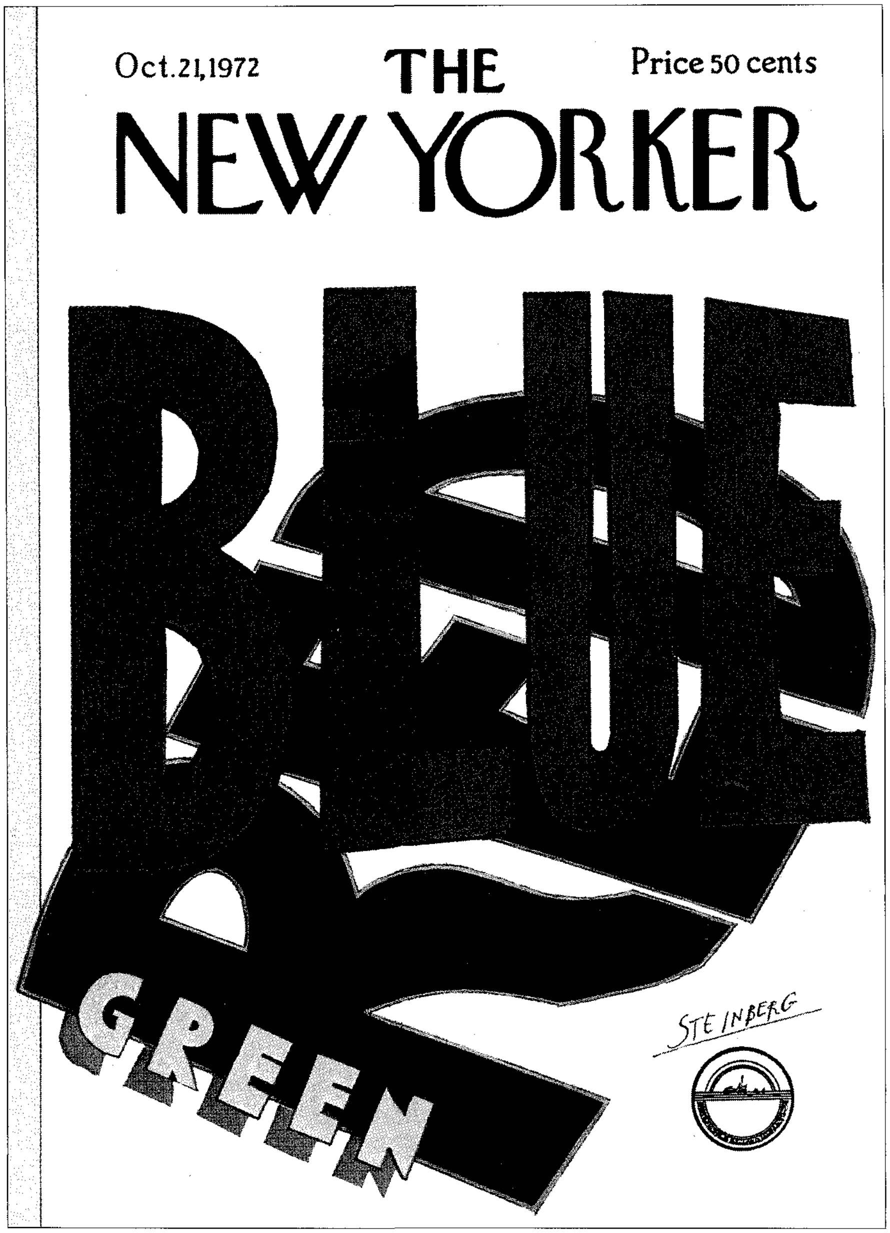
VIRGINIA SNEDEKER, JUNE 10, 1939



BENOÎT VAN INNIS, NOVEMBER 18, 2002



BENOÎT VAN INNIS, NOVEMBER 10, 2003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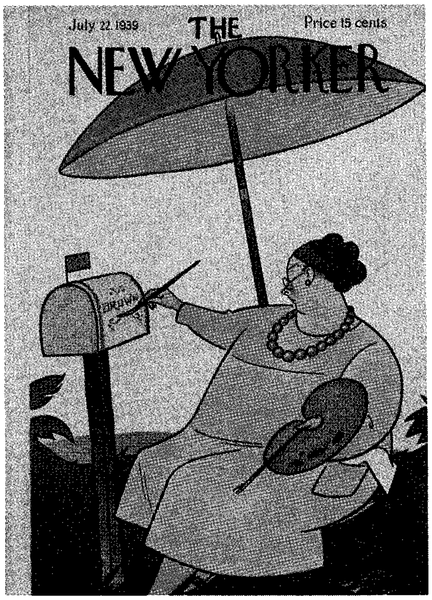
SAUL STEINBERG, OCTOBER 21, 1972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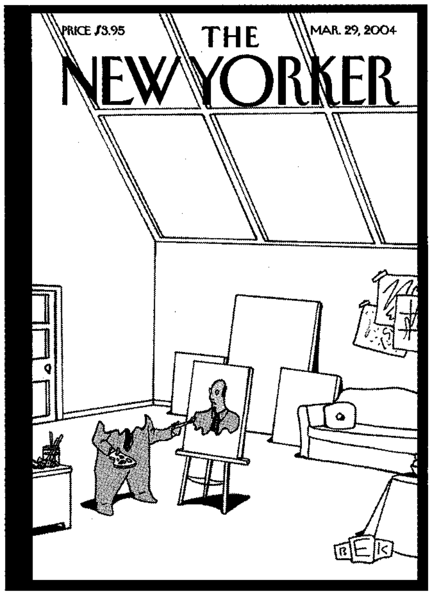
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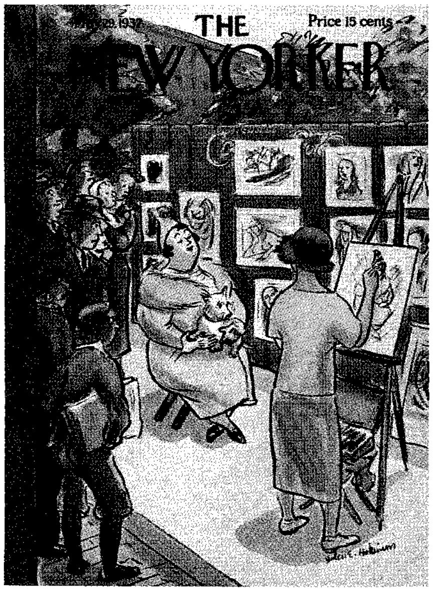
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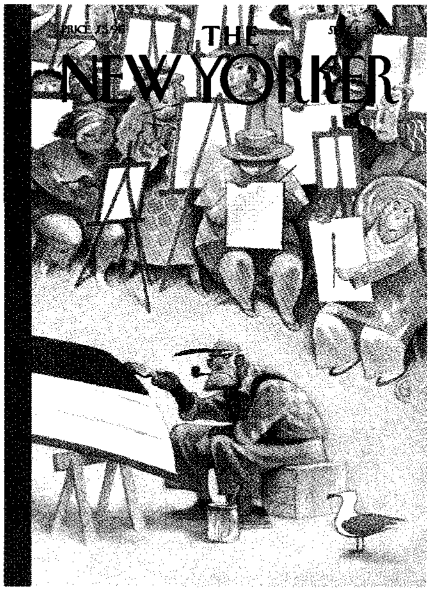
HELEN HOKINSON, MAY 29, 1937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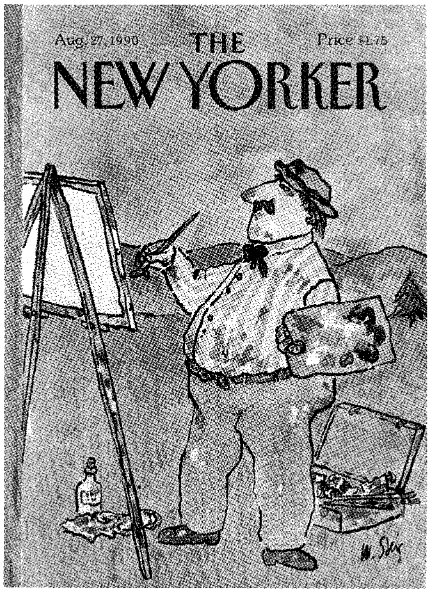
CARTER GOODRICH, SEPTEMBER 1, 2003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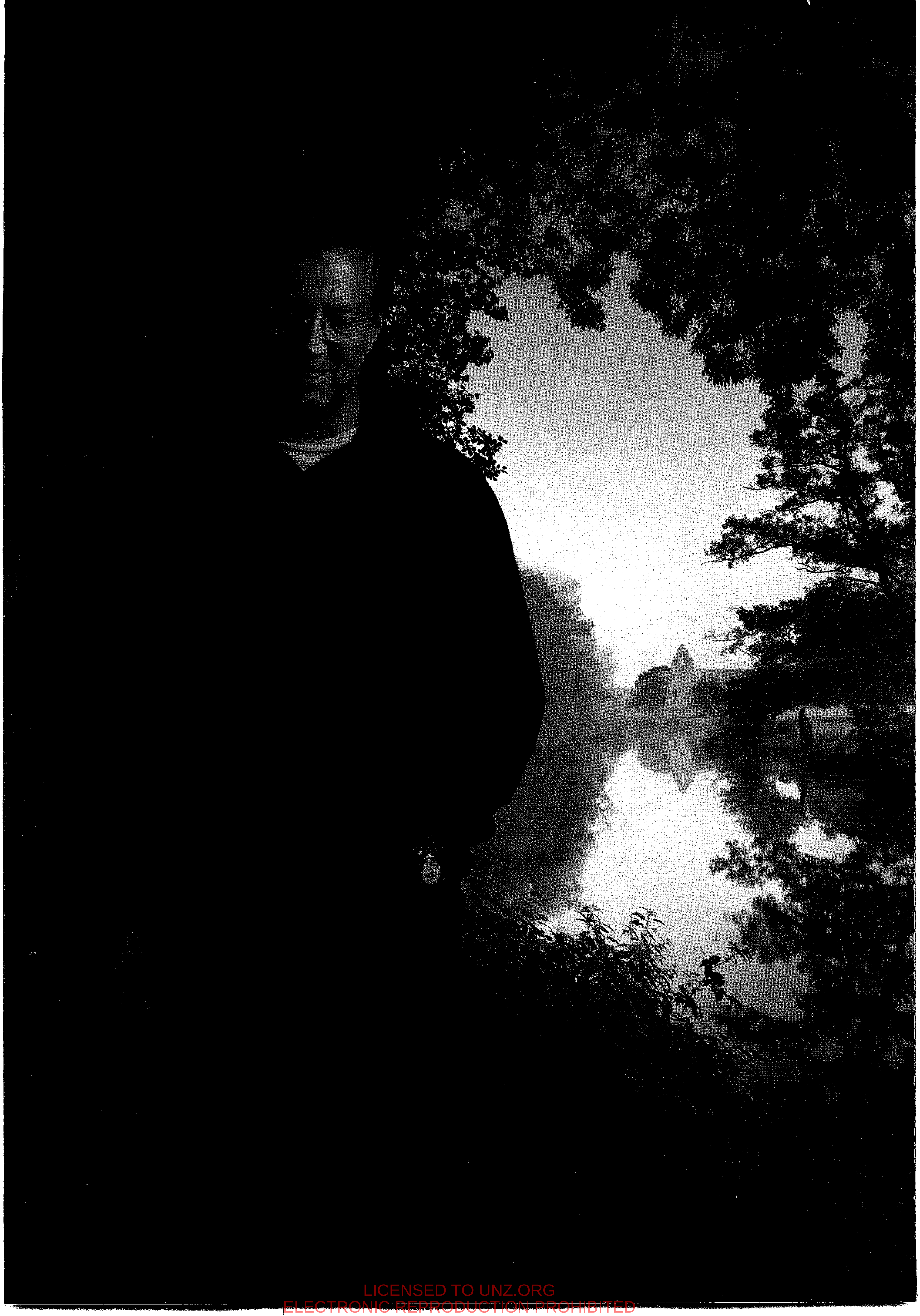
WILLIAM STEIG, AUGUST 27, 1990



WHO WOULD EVER HAVE THOUGHT
RIPLEY, SURREY
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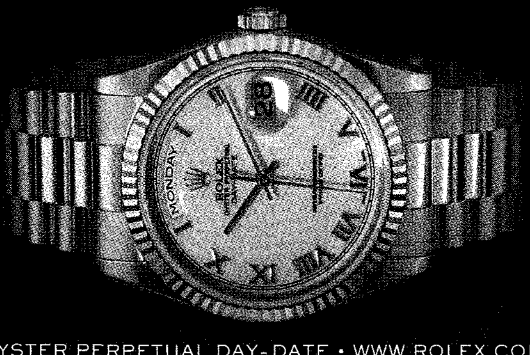
HOME OF MISSISSIPPI DELTA BLUES?

A world from Mississippi, a young man listens to Delta blues on the BBC. He feels its intent. Appreciates its ethos. Unwilling to just mimic those legendary riffs, he takes a hand at reworking them; and at 17, Eric Clapton takes his passion for blues to London. Over 45 albums later, the end of his career is nowhere in sight. Just like the Mississippi's delta from the center of Ripley.



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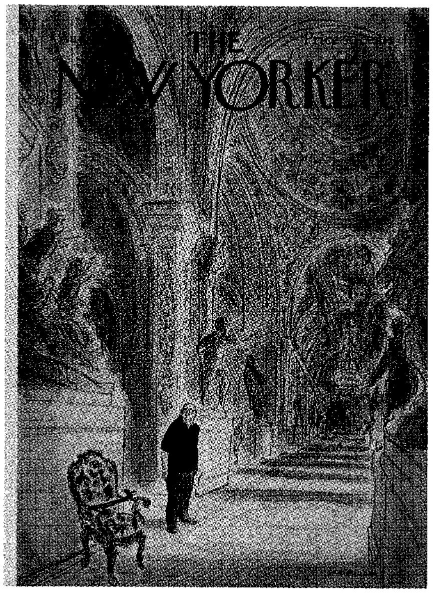
dressed in black. Change is on the way, and austerity and exclusivity are on the way out: three years later, the art lovers' smiles and soft curves enliven Richard Taylor's gray barn. There are awkward moments in the sartorial evolution of art appreciators: in James Stevenson's 1971 cover, an American man, in polo shirt and loafers, seems to have lost his way (or his wife). At the start of the new millennium, art no longer belongs entirely, or even primarily, to élites and aesthetes. The proud tourist couple in Ian Falconer's cover gets to take in Claude Monet's water lilies in their natural setting—and also buy the T-shirt and the cap.

—*Françoise Mouly*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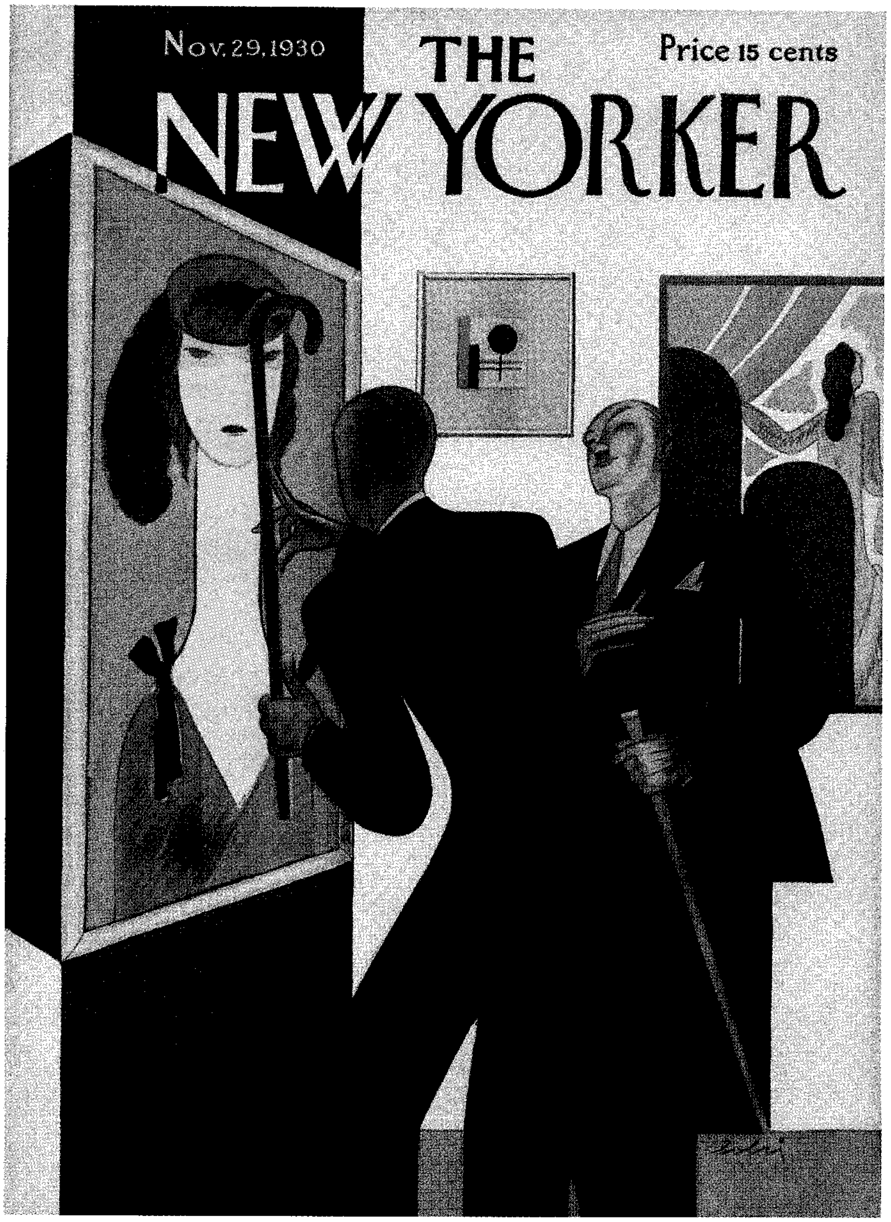
JAMES STEVENSON, AUGUST 21, 1971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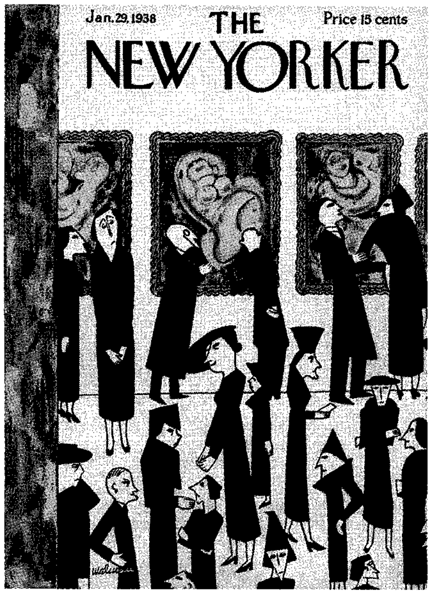
VLADIMIR BOBRITSKY, NOVEMBER 29, 1930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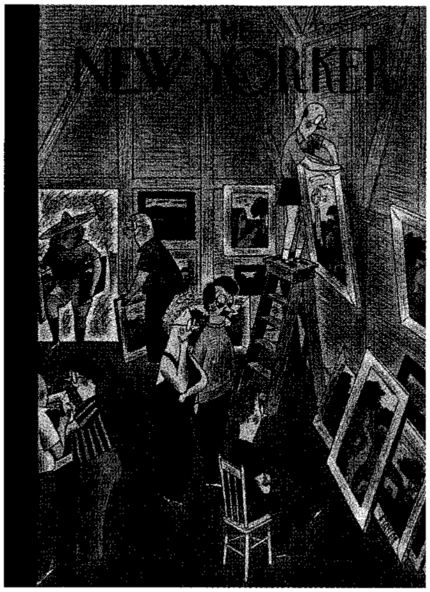
THE
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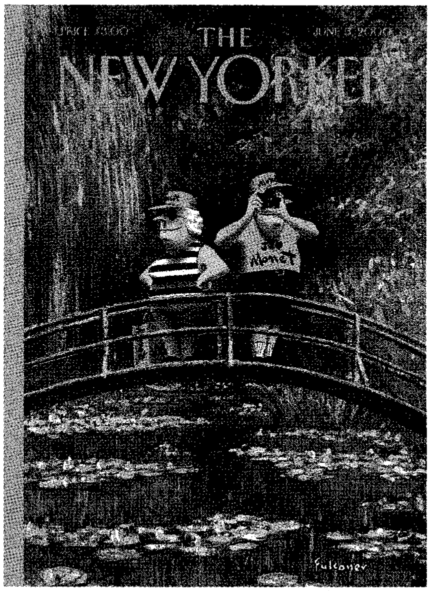
RICHARD TAYLOR, JULY 26, 1941


THE
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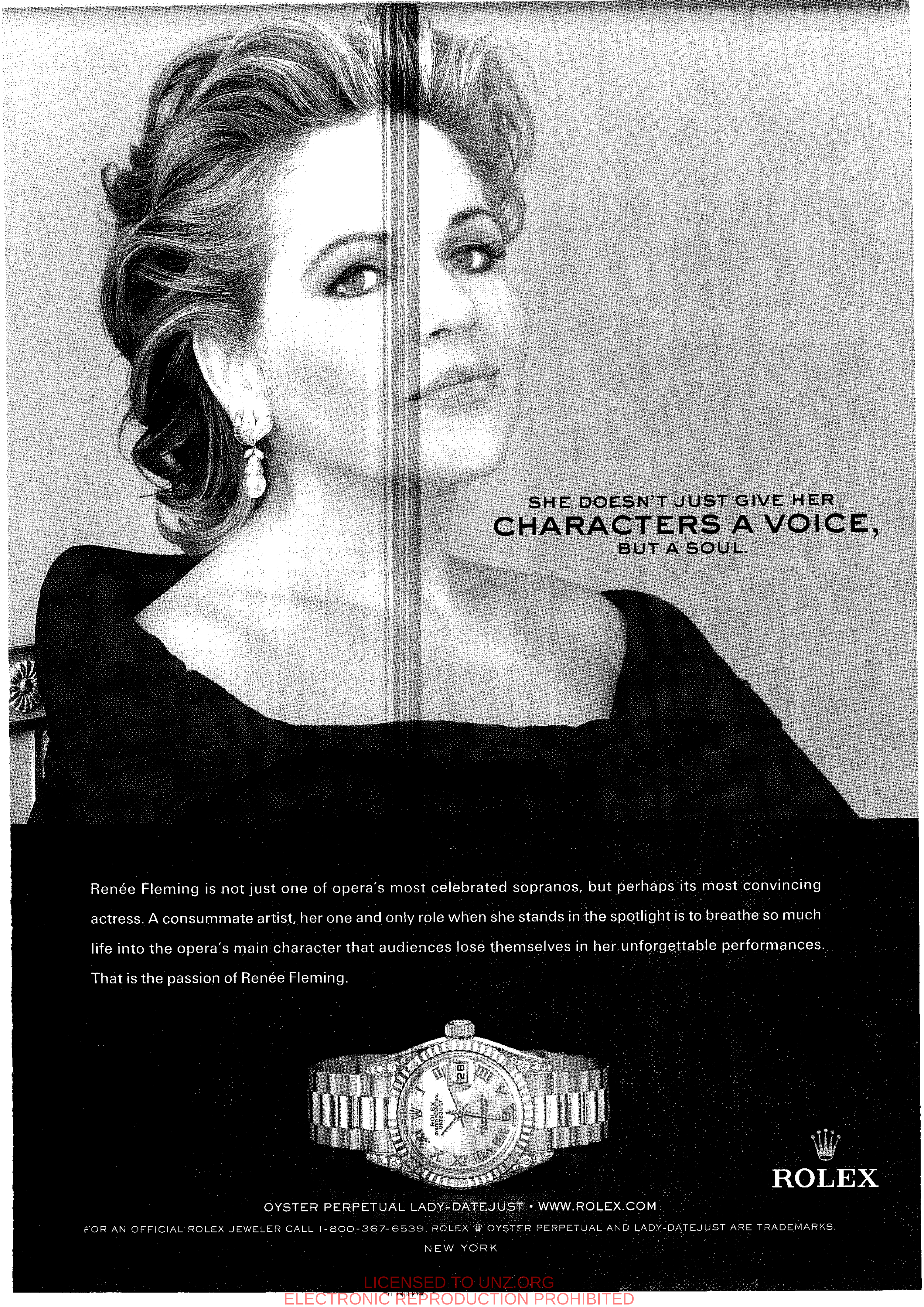
Monet

IAN FALCONER, JUNE 5, 2000



Renée Fleming is not just one of opera's most celebrated sopranos, but perhaps its most convincing actress. A consummate artist, her one and only role when she stands in the spotlight is to breathe so much life into the opera's main character that audiences lose themselves in her unforgettable performances. That is the passion of Renée Fleming.

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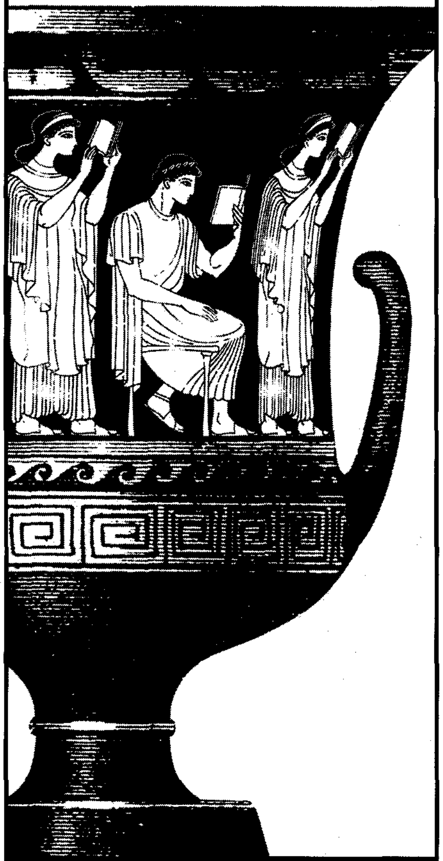

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PEDIATRIC PRESCRIPTIONS

Jerome Groopman's report on the need for better pediatric drug-dosage information shines a spotlight on a deficiency in the medical community of which children are not the only victims ("The Pediatric Gap," January 10th). At the other end of the human life cycle, older people receive medications and treatments that are neither tested on nor intended for use by persons older than sixty-five. Despite the fact that older people consume more prescription drugs than any other group—and also constitute a rapidly growing segment of the population—few, if any, clinical trials have examined the effects of prescribing standard-sized dosages to older people. Like our children, the older population deserves appropriate dosages of prescription drugs. The time has come for the Food and Drug Administration and the medical community to address both issues.

Robert N. Butler, M.D.
New York City

One of the drugs discussed in Groopman's article is the sedative and anesthetic agent propofol. He writes that the F.D.A. has added a warning contraindicating its use among youths. Groopman's discussion of the issues surrounding propofol refers correctly to its relatively long-term use sedating children in intensive-care units. However, it is worth noting that there are other situations, such as brief surgical or diagnostic procedures in children, in which it remains widely and safely used by pediatric anesthesiologists.

Victor C. Baum
Professor of Anesthesiology and Pediatrics
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Va.

NOT GUILTY

As an attorney who has represented a death-row inmate for nearly two decades, I felt my usual rage when reading Jeffrey Toobin's account of Kenneth Peasley, the Tucson prosecutor who put three men on Arizona's death row after knowingly presenting false testimony ("Killer Instincts," January 17th). The appellate decisions in death-penalty cases that I read are rife with accounts of serious misconduct by prosecutors which the courts routinely choose to ignore as "harmless error." As Toobin's article illustrates, there are many sources of error in our criminal-law system—mistaken witnesses, manipulated evidence, lying jailhouse informants, dishonest prosecutors, ineffective defense counsel. Worst of all, arguably, is the role of honest but credulous jurors, who are too ready to believe any witness the state vouches for and too confident in their ability to tell when someone is lying. DNA evidence, where available, has done much to demonstrate the system's vulnerabilities and prevent innocent people from being convicted. But in many cases, unfortunately, there is simply no DNA evidence to refute the errors.

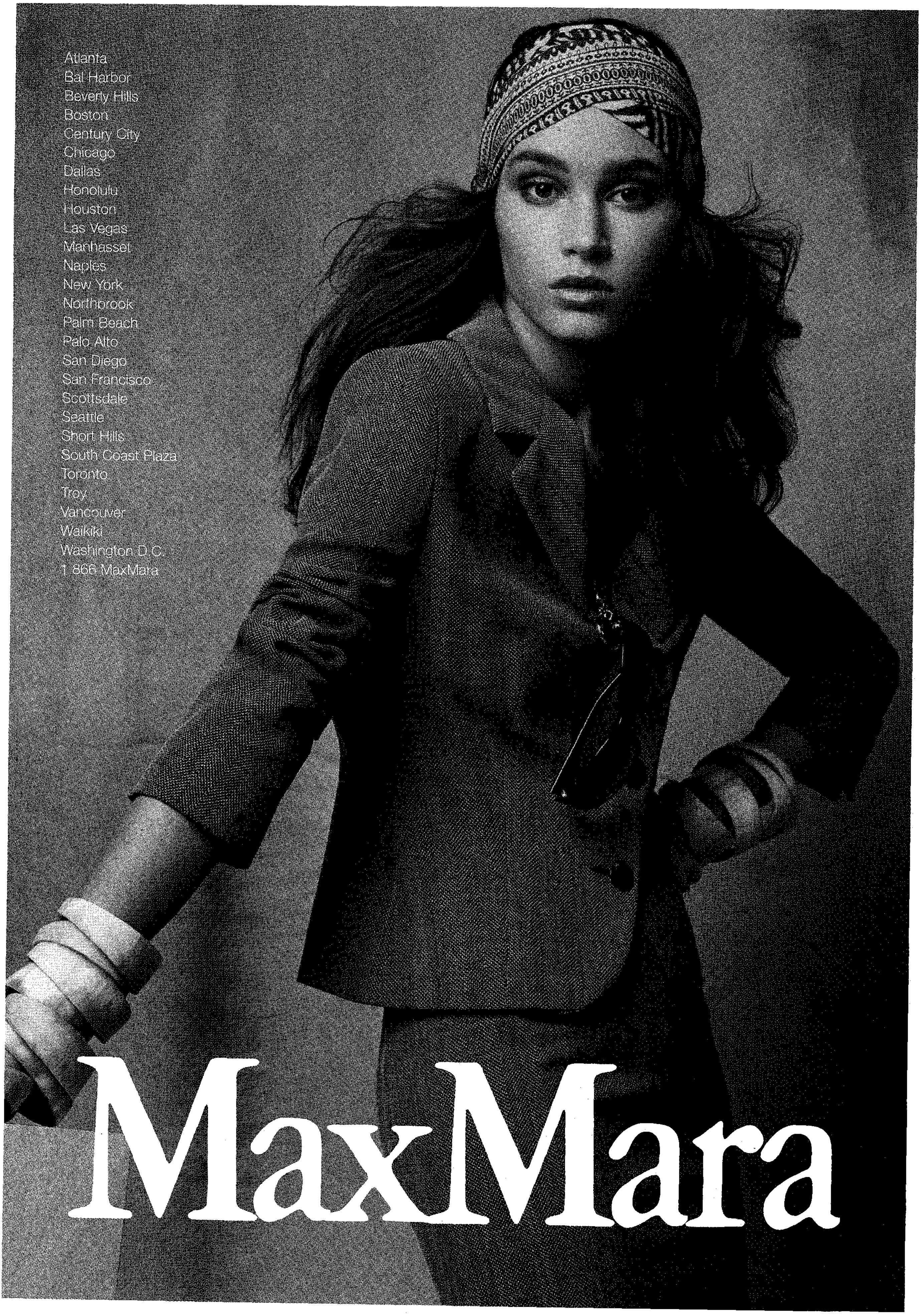
Mitchell Zimmerman
Palo Alto, Calif.

How do the sorts of prosecutorial offenses that Toobin presents happen? Often, prosecutors develop a theory about a suspect and ignore all evidence to the contrary. Even after exonerations occur, the system regularly refuses to admit and remedy its mistakes. The underlying failure is that those who engage in prosecutorial misconduct are frequently not held accountable. State bar associations bear ultimate responsibility for protecting the public from bad lawyering and for imposing sanctions on lawyers. Until the system is reformed, innocent people will continue to be convicted and even sentenced to death while the guilty go free.

John F. Terzano
President, The Justice Project
Washington, D.C.

FROM OHIO TO OZ

Describing the metal water tower in his hometown in Ohio, Ian Frazier comments that these structures were once so common that one could imagine their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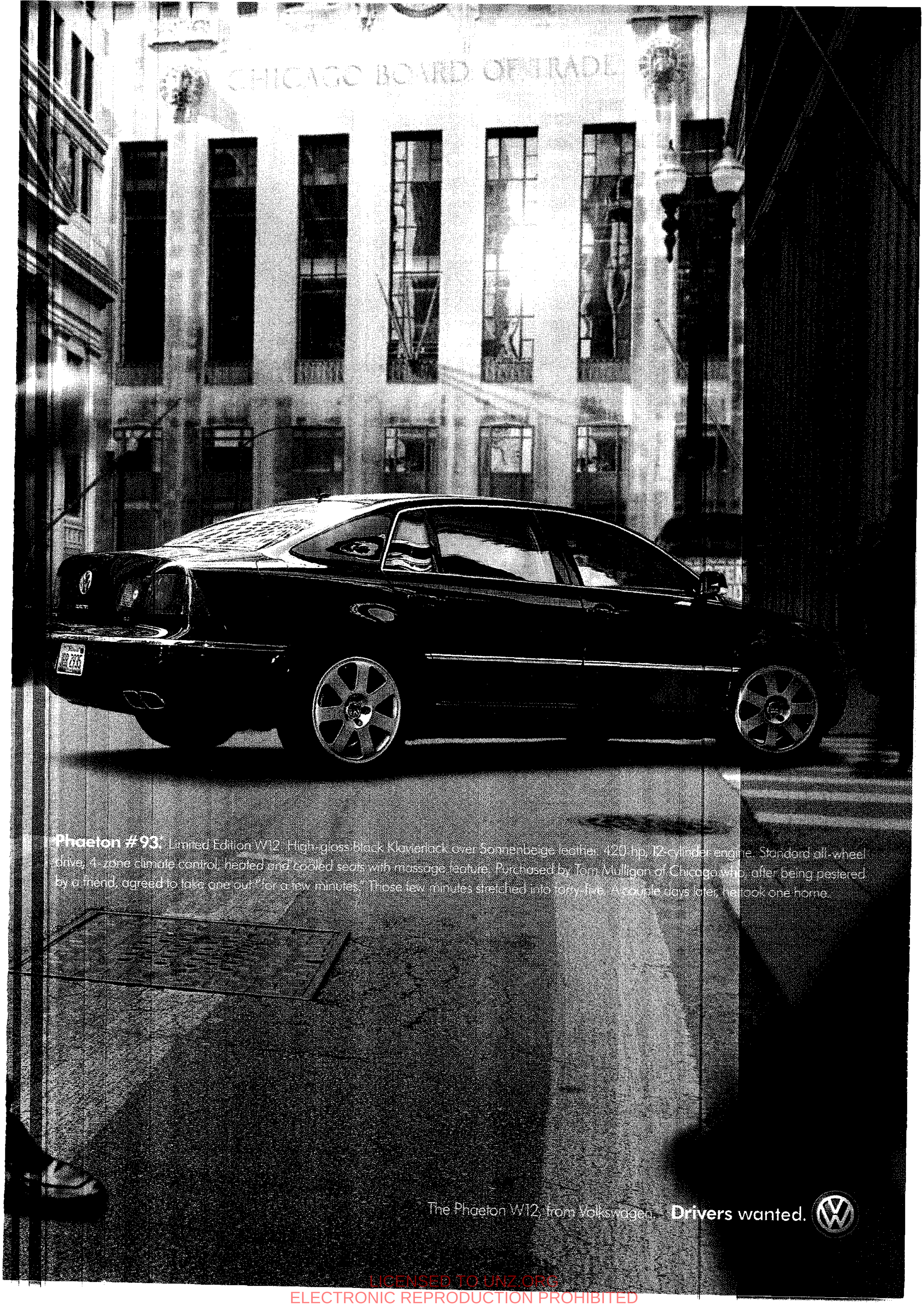

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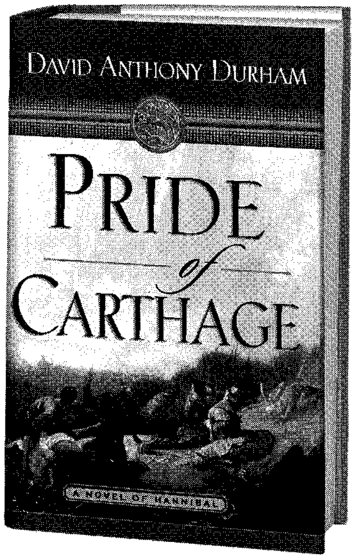
The Phaeton W12, from Volkswagen. **Drivers** wanted.

FROM THE AUTHOR OF
GABRIEL'S STORY

David Anthony Durham's epic novel of Hannibal, brilliant enemy of Rome and pride of Carthage.



Re-creating one of the great clashes of all time, David Anthony Durham's sweeping tale of Carthage versus Rome resurrects the audacious military genius who brought the fight to Italy on the backs of elephants. Tracing the fates of Hannibal and his family, his foes and followers, this novel has the battlefield grandeur and literary grace of a true classic.

"A masterpiece... Rare and wonderful."
—Jeffrey Lent, author of *In the Fall*

"An extraordinary achievement."
—Tom Holland, author of *Rubicon*

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providing the inspiration for the Tin Man in "The Wizard of Oz" ("Out of Ohio," January 10th). It's certainly plausible, but the commonly accepted story is even more peculiar. Before turning to children's literature, L. Frank Baum was an accomplished window-trimmer. For a window display at a hardware store, Baum created a metal man using a wash-boiler, stovepipes, and a saucepan, topped with a funnel for a hat. Whether the metal man helped sales at the store is unknown; it certainly helped Baum's writing.

Stephen Persing
Wethersfield, Conn.

CHRISTOPHER AND HIS KIND

I was disappointed by Hilton Als's assessment, in his recent review of Peter Parker's Christopher Isherwood biography, that the translations of Hindu texts Isherwood worked on after moving to California represent a slackening of his writing talent (Books, January 17th). Isherwood fans have a tendency to write this work off as the product of a misguided fad. But Isherwood's memoir "My Guru and His Disciple" shows that he studied the Vedanta for many years and developed an accomplished understanding of the concepts behind it, and his translations are considered by many to be the finest ever produced. Isherwood's engagement with this area of thought was more serious than the usual stereotypes about West Coast New Age movements would encourage us to think.

Larry Borok
New Milford, Conn.

I agree with Als that much of what Christopher Isherwood wrote is tediously narcissistic, but his three Berlin novels of the late nineteen-thirties are a lasting achievement and surely an exception to Als's observation of Isherwood that "for a novelist, he didn't especially care about invention." Isherwood's evocation of Berlin between the wars—in "Mr. Norris Changes Trains," "Sally Bowles," and "Goodbye to Berlin"—is simultaneously sardonic and moving, and the voice is uniquely his own. The novels drew admiration from Virginia Woolf, who, with Leonard Woolf, published them at the Hogarth Press. She commented that Isherwood was "a real novelist . . . full of acute observations on character & scenes. Odd how few 'novelists' I know: it would interest me to discuss fiction with him."

David H. Porter
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

BEN'S BUDDY

I read David Denby's piece on Ben Stiller with great interest (The Current Cinema, January 24th & 31st). Not because it was good or fair toward my friend but exactly because it wasn't. I've acted in two hundred and thirty-seven buddy movies and, with that experience, I've developed an almost preternatural feel for the beats that any good buddy movie must have. And maybe the most crucial audience-rewarding beat is where one buddy comes to the aid of the other guy to help defeat a villain. Or bully. Or jerk. Someone the audience can really root against. And in Denby I realized excitedly that I had hit the trifecta. How could an audience not be dying for a real "Billy Jack" moment of reckoning for Denby after he dismisses or diminishes or just plain insults practically everything Stiller has ever worked on? And not letting it rest there, in true bully fashion Denby moves on to take some shots at the way Ben looks and even his Jewishness, describing him as the "latest, and crudest, version of the urban Jewish male on the make." The audience is practically howling for blood! I really wish I could deliver for them—but that's Jackie Chan's role.

Owen Wilson
Dallas, Texas

CORRECTION: The Mail of January 3rd contained the incorrect statistic that four-fifths of Bush voters identified moral values as the most important factor in their decision. In fact, four-fifths of those identifying moral values as the most important factor of their decision were Bush voters.

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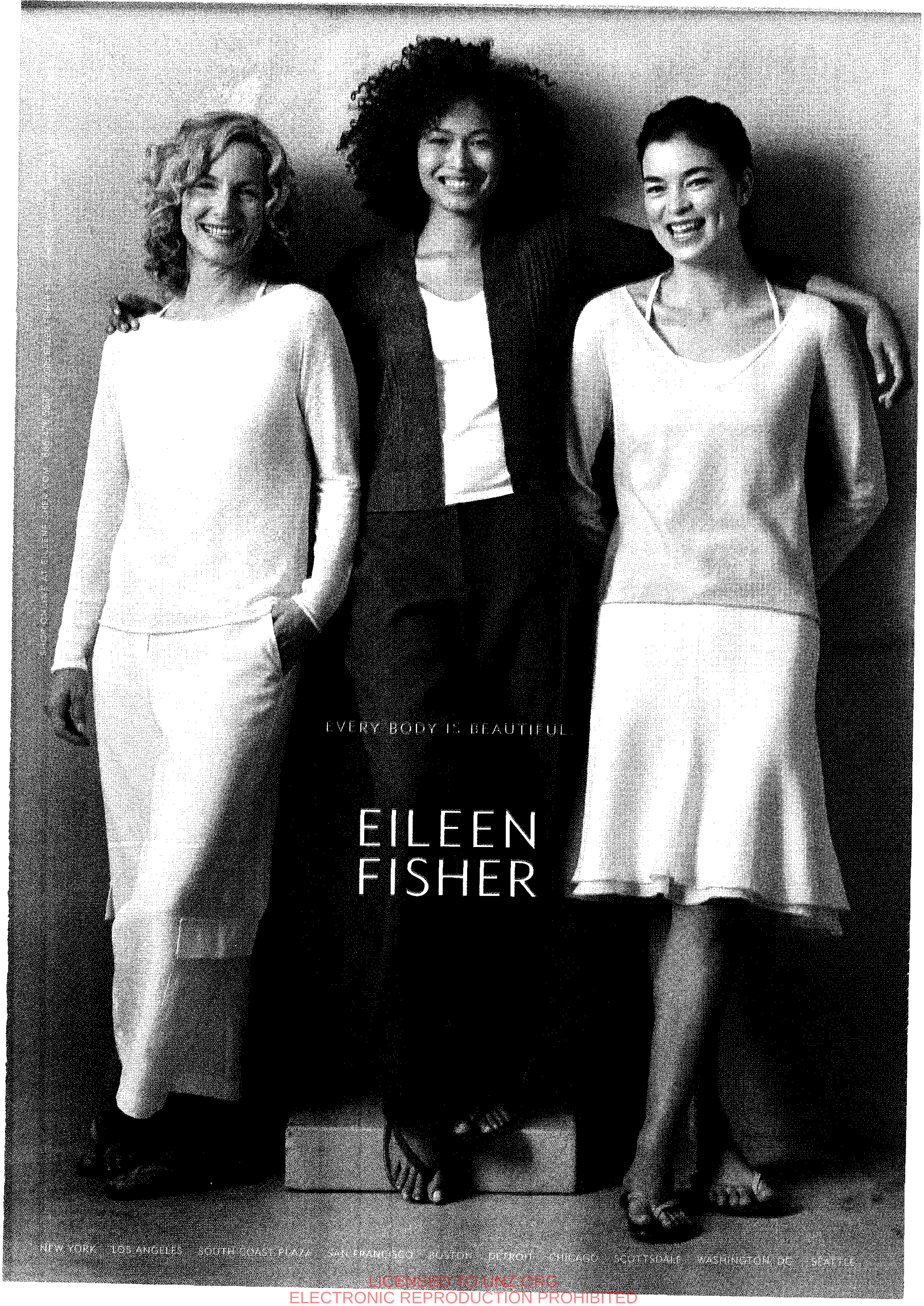
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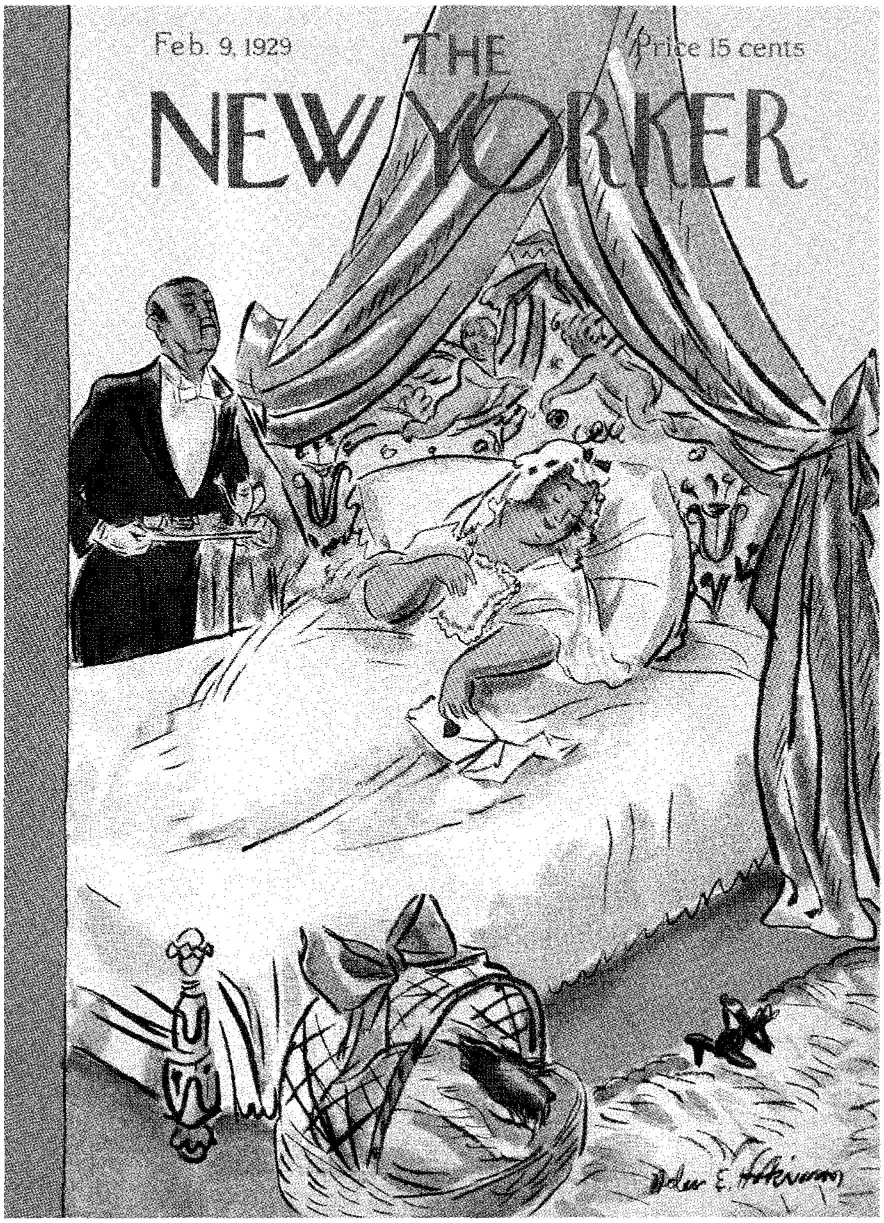
LOVE AND ROMANCE

Love, in all its forms, has always been one of *The New Yorker's* most reliable cover topics. S. W. Reynolds's lovers, from 1927, swoon toward each other across a table; in 2002, Istvan Banyai's pair make explicit contact. In a Thanksgiving cover from 1948, Peter Arno's lovers are triumphant after dark; public opprobrium has enabled a private romantic opportunity. In another depiction of physical love, from 1997, Art Spiegelman takes a particularly anatomical approach to Cupid's arrow. J. J. Sempé, who has often represented the isolated figure in the big city, shows the appeal of romantic solitude, while Bruce Eric Kaplan looks at the starker aspects of love—she may say black when he says white, but at least they are speaking the same language. James Thurber, on the other hand, takes a communal view.

Like love itself, *New Yorker* covers sometimes require patience. In 1961, Charles Addams, foreseeing the looming encroachment of computers on our lives, surprised his lonely programmer with a simple red heart; twenty years later, a similar Valentine appeared under a heavily barricaded apartment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Helen E. Hokinson

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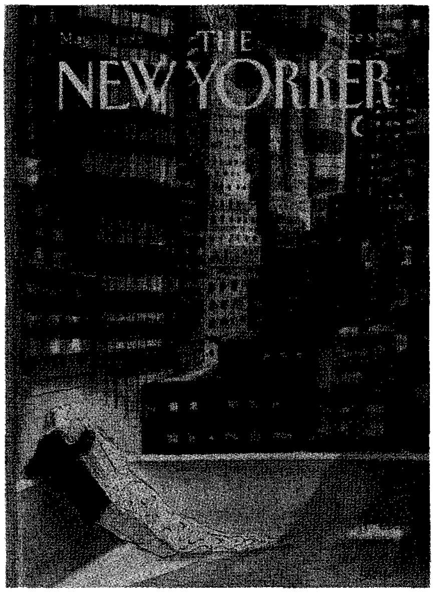
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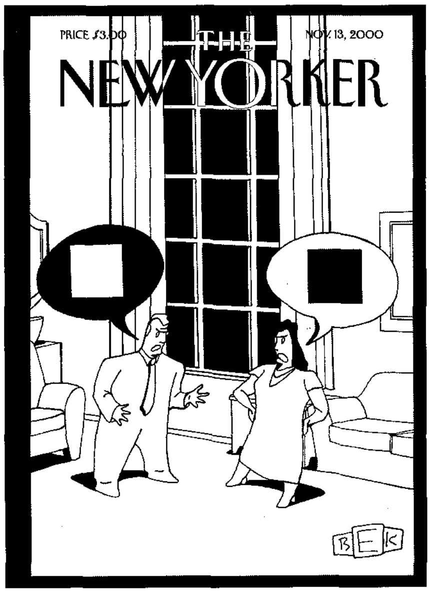
J. J. SEMPÉ, MAY 30, 1988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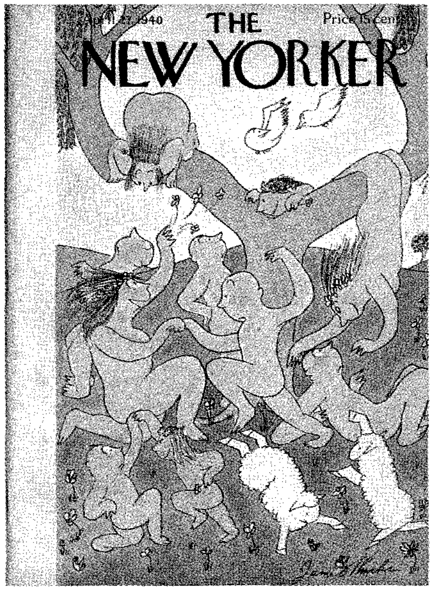
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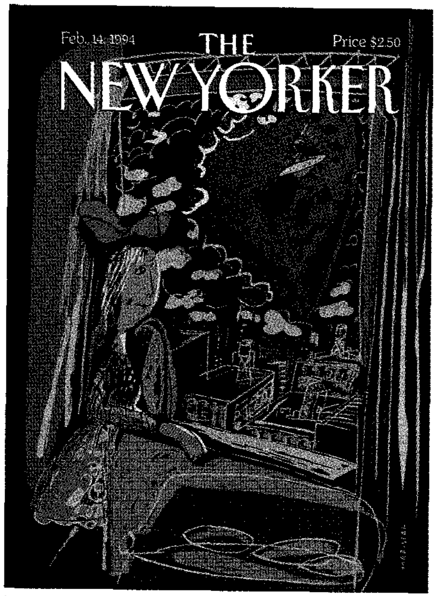
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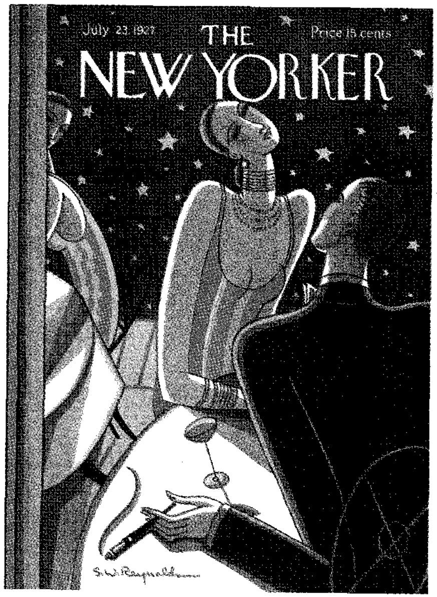
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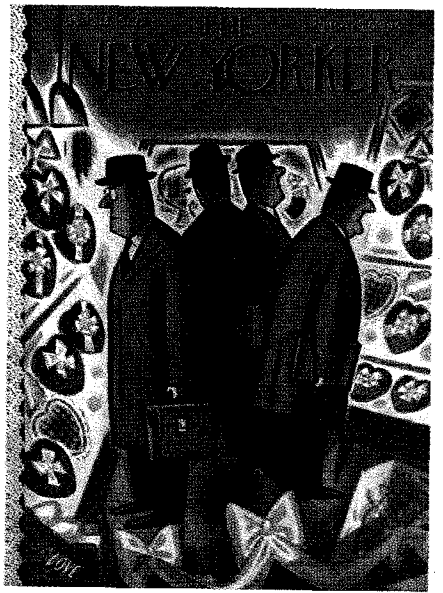
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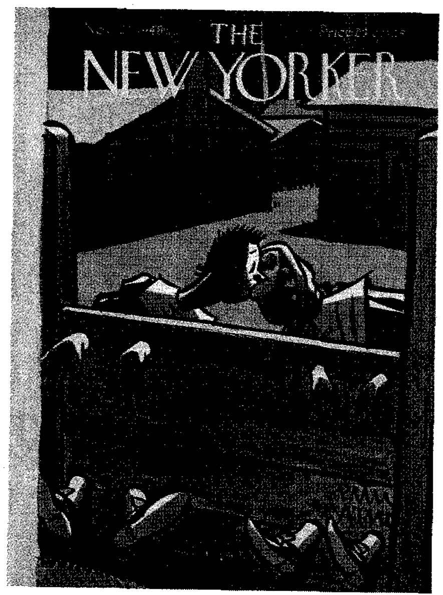
LEONARD DOVE, FEBRUARY 13, 1960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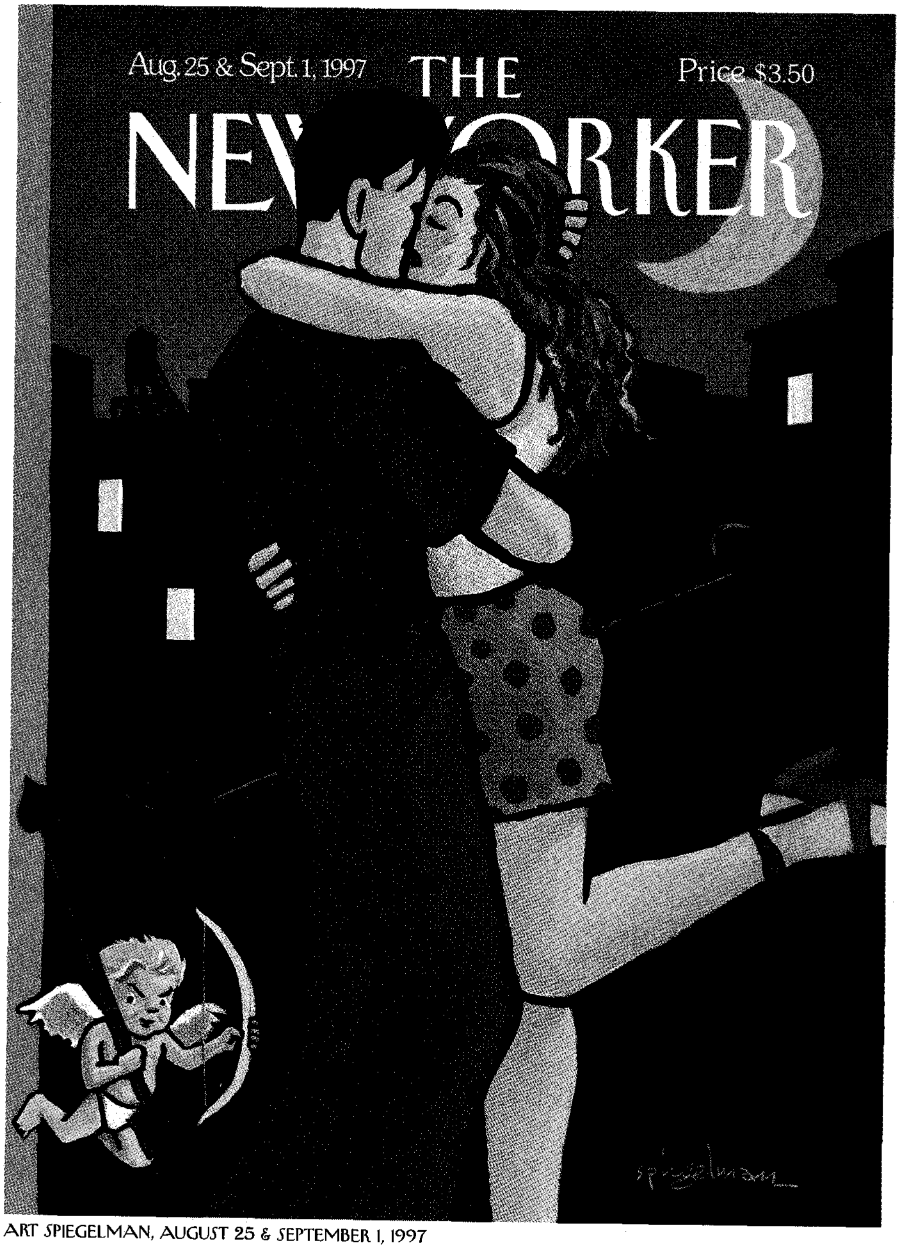
PETER ARNO, NOVEMBER 27, 1948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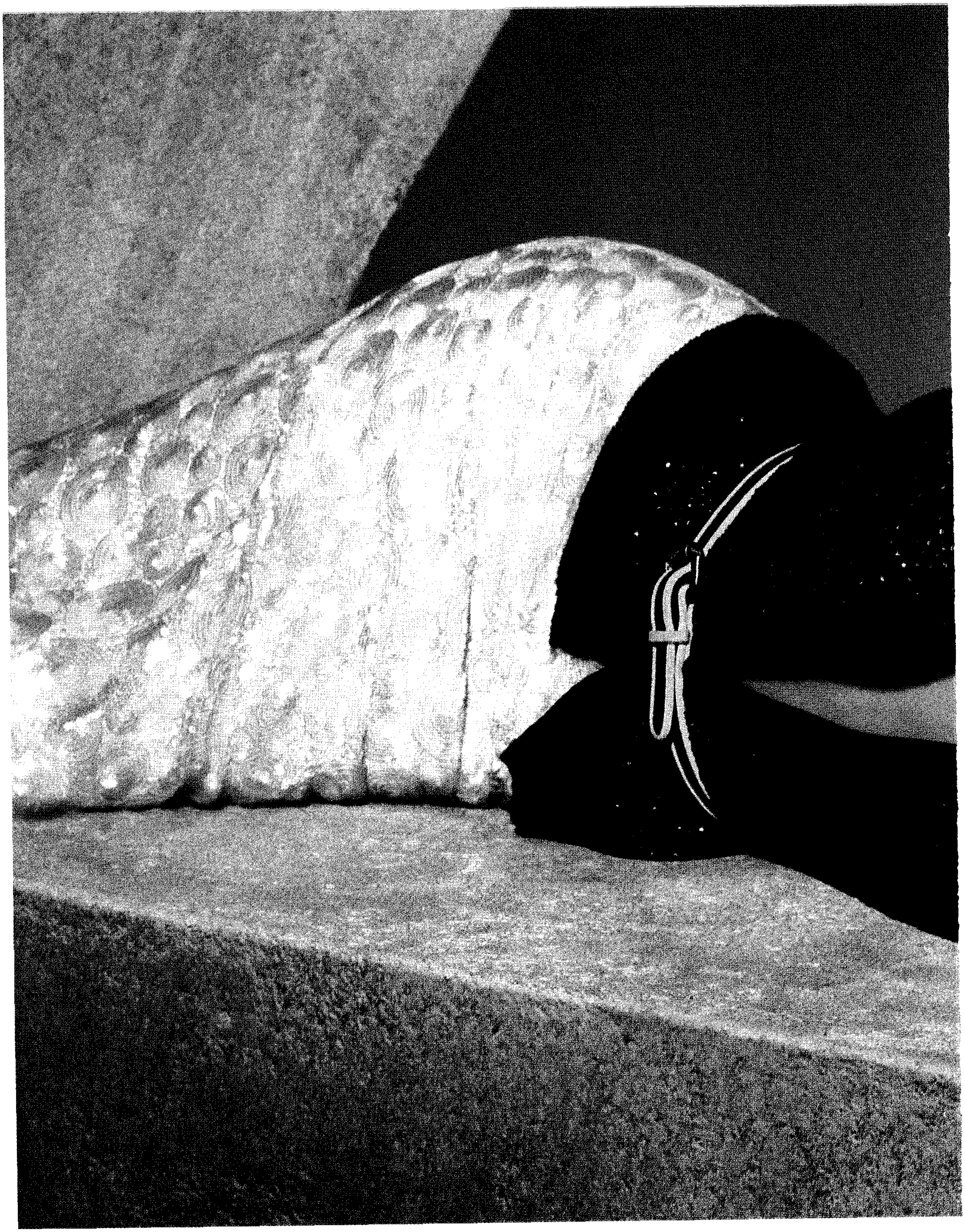
ART SPIEGELMAN, AUGUST 25 & SEPTEMBER 1, 1997



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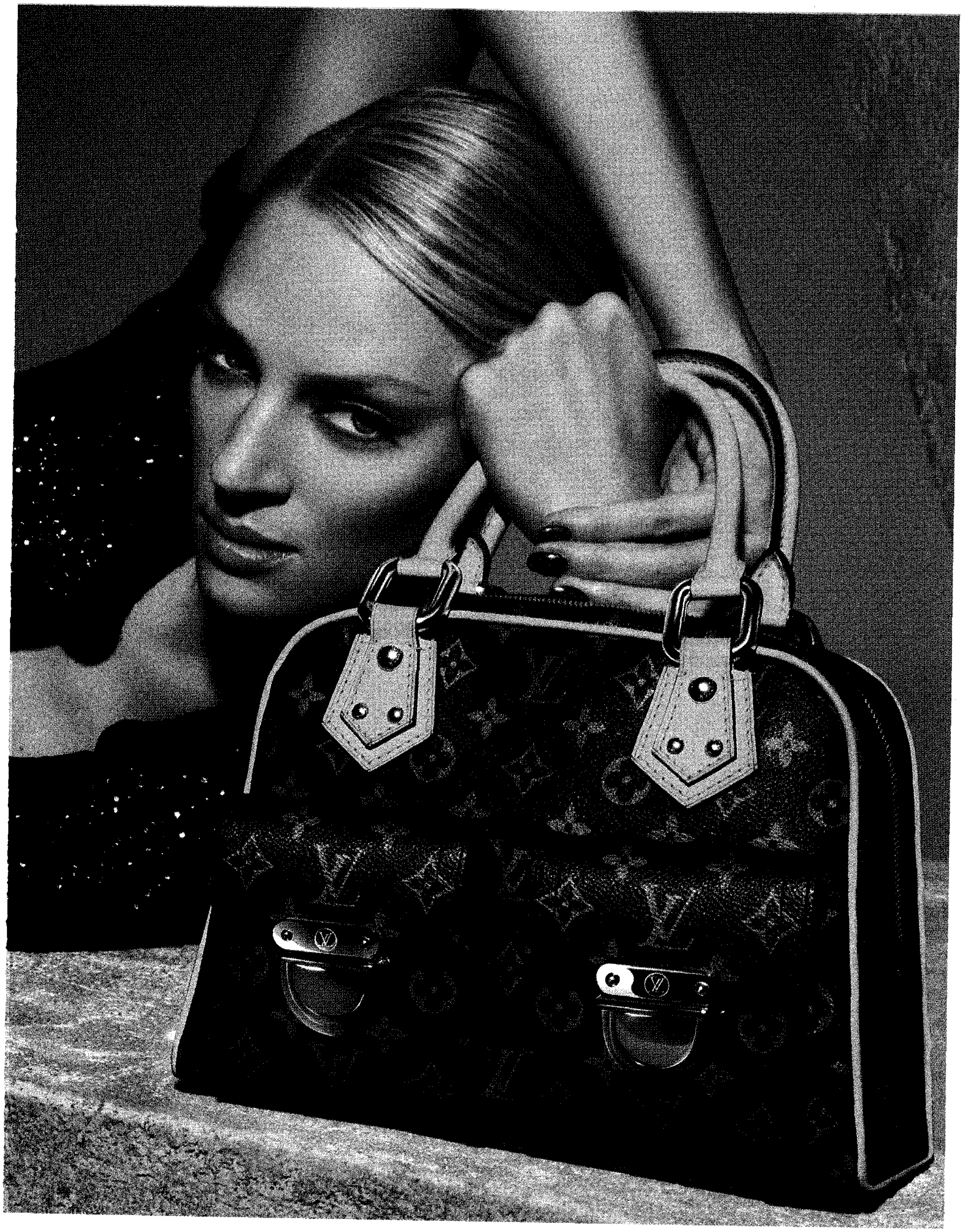

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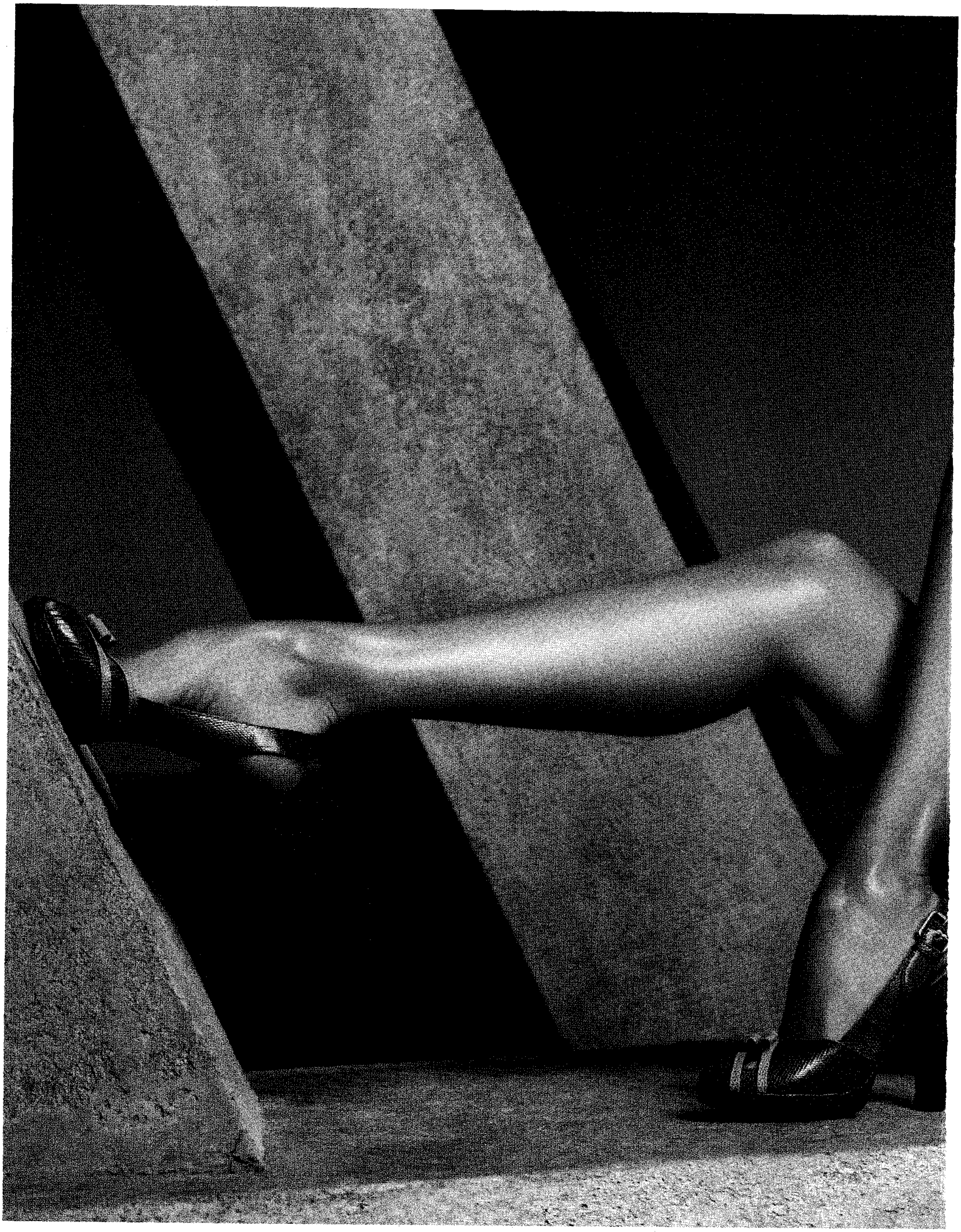

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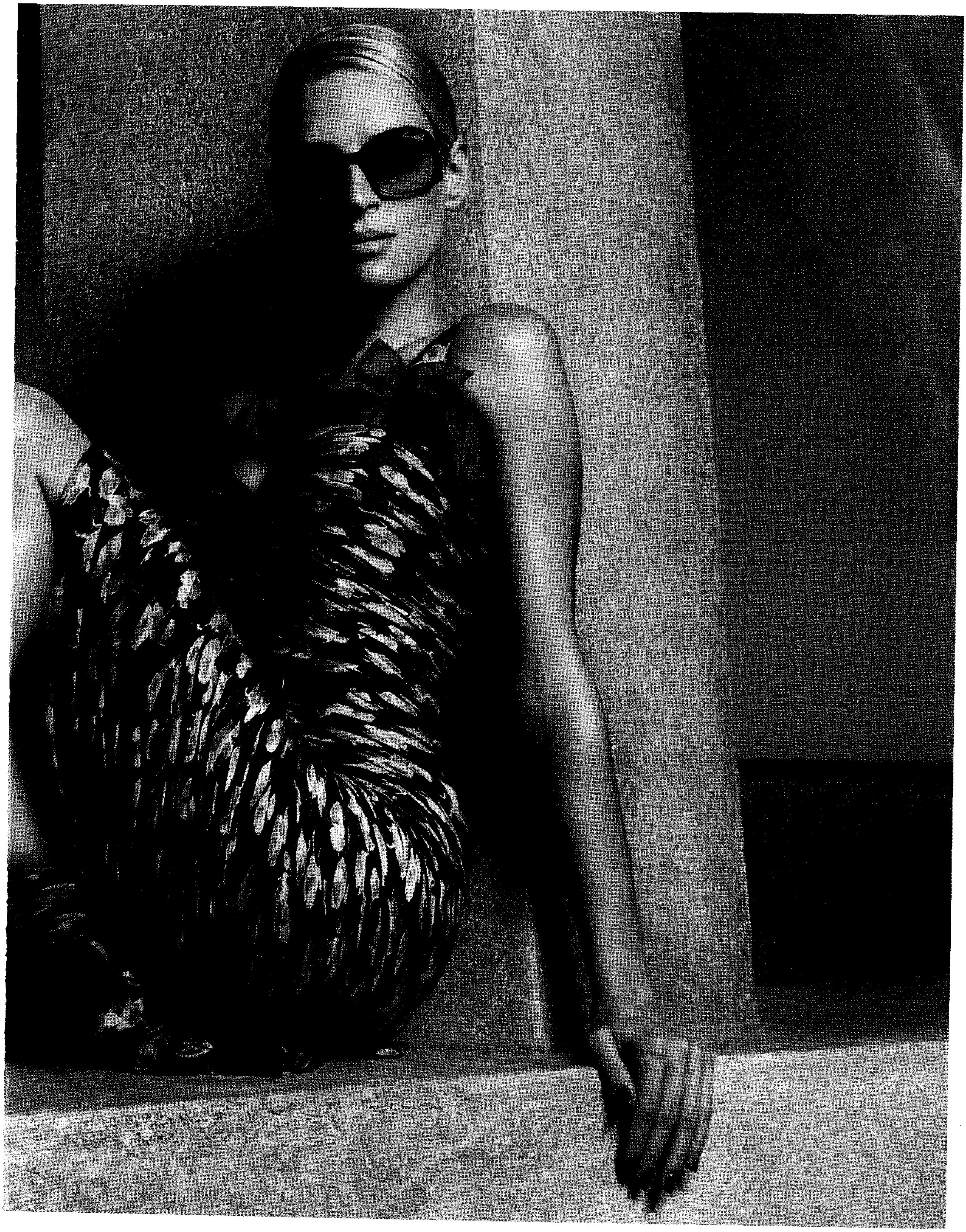

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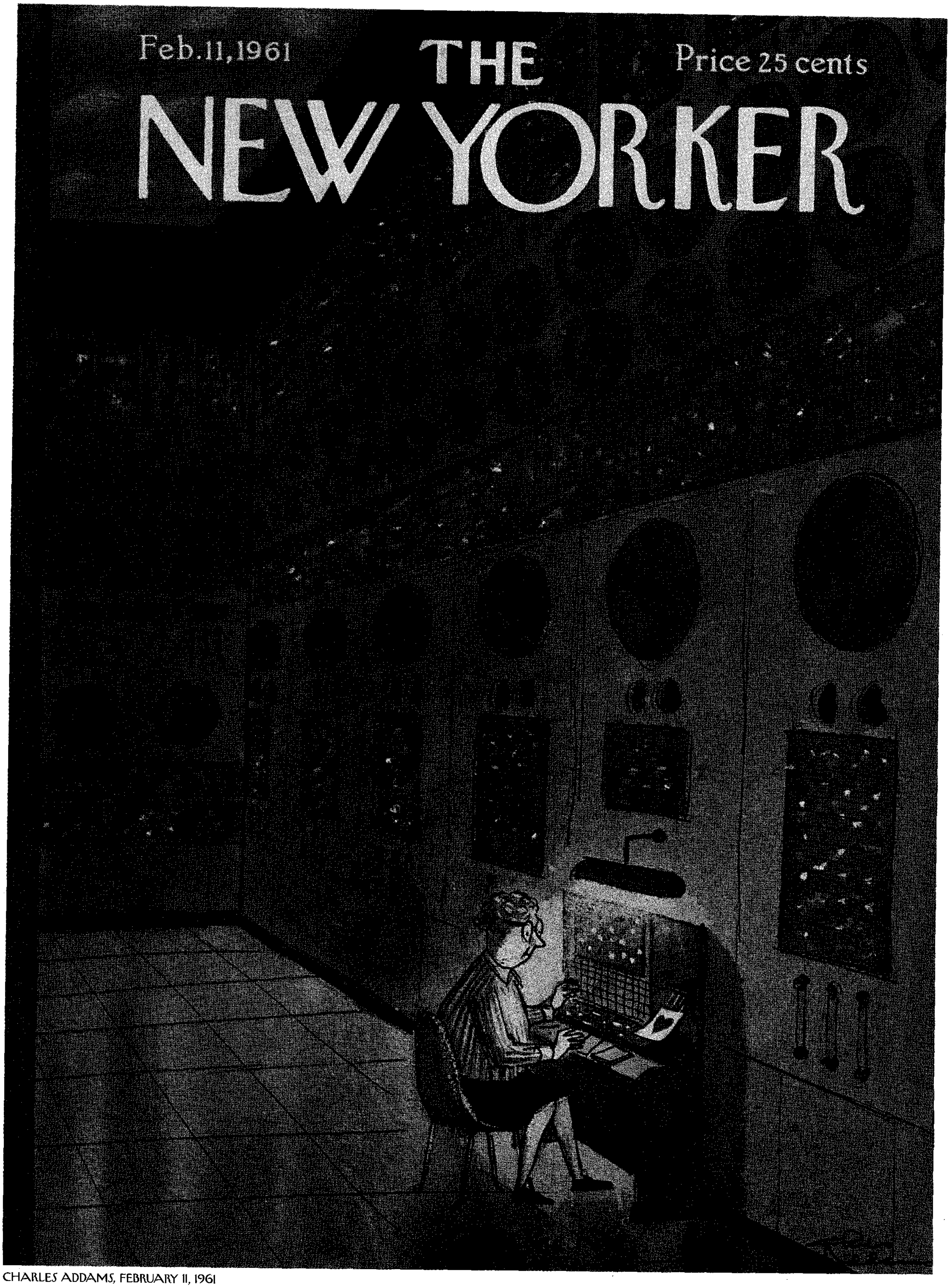
Feb.11,1961
THE NEW YORKER
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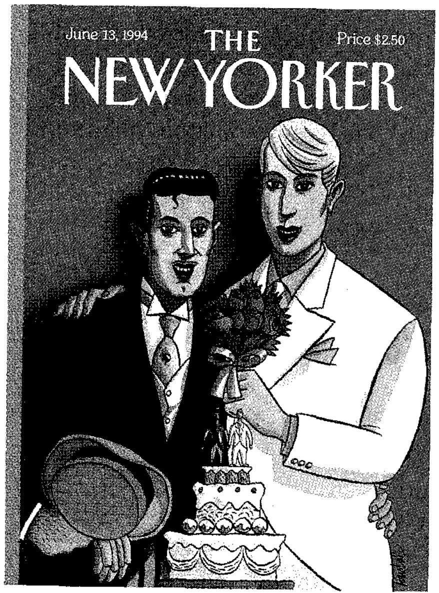
CHARLES ADDAMS, FEBRUARY 11, 1961

door. Gender roles were the topic in 1994, when Jacques de Loustal applied a pink background to what was not yet a banal image: two men getting married.

The only disturbing trend may be the increasing prevalence of weapons in the imagery of love. In 1999, Ian Falconer's sniper Cupid was an absurd exaggeration; the guns surrounding Carter Goodrich's soldier in 2003 may be ominous, but they reflect the new reality. And in 2004, in that same security-conscious America, David Macaulay's Cupid is hustled into an interrogation room—not for public indecency but because he's carrying a bow and arrow.

—*F. M.*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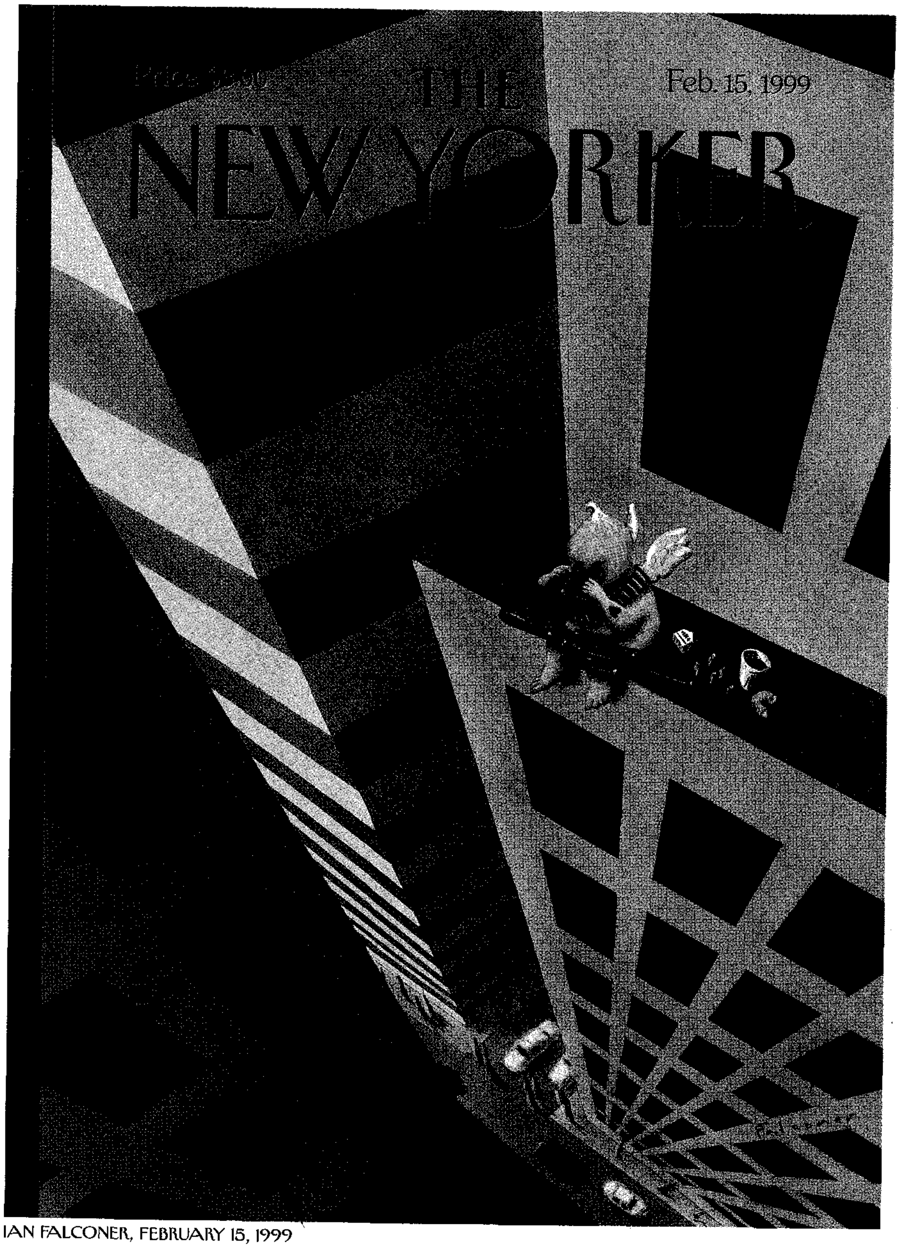
JACQUES DE LOUSTAL, JUNE 13, 1994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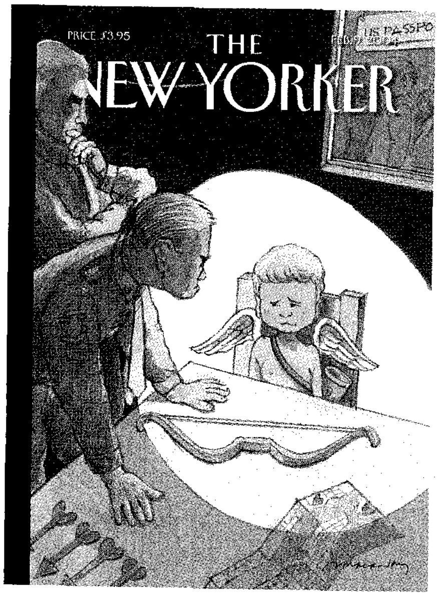
IAN FALCONER, FEBRUARY 15, 1999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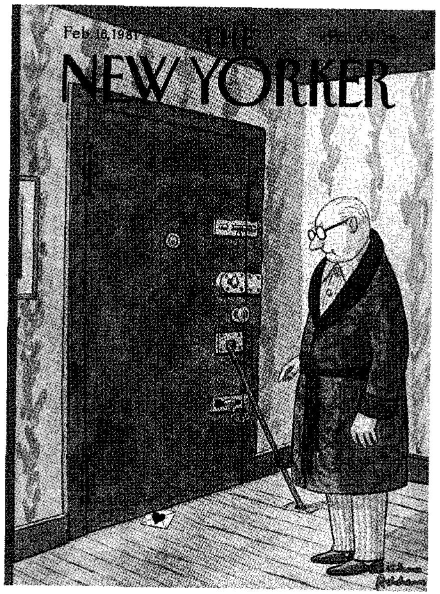
Feb. 16, 1981
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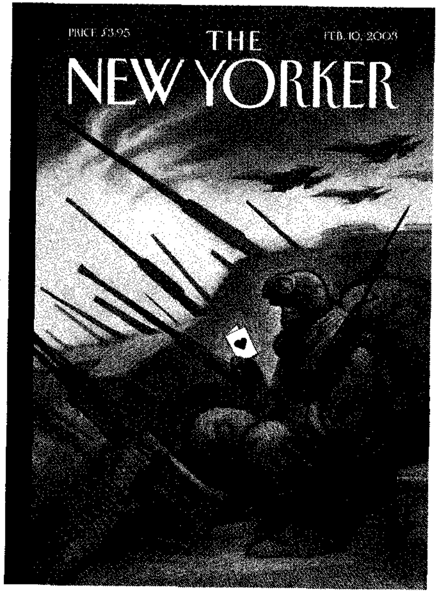
CHARLES ADDAMS, FEBRUARY 16, 1981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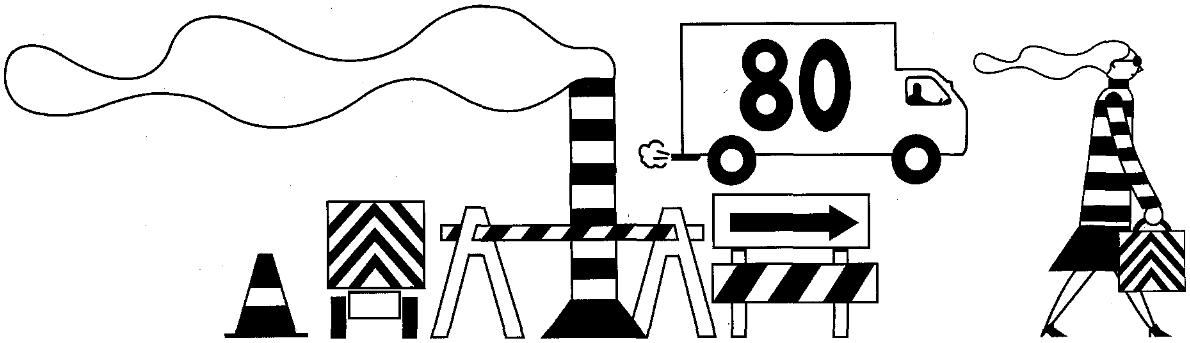
CARTER GOODRICH, FEBRUARY 10, 2003

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

GETTING HIS LICKS IN

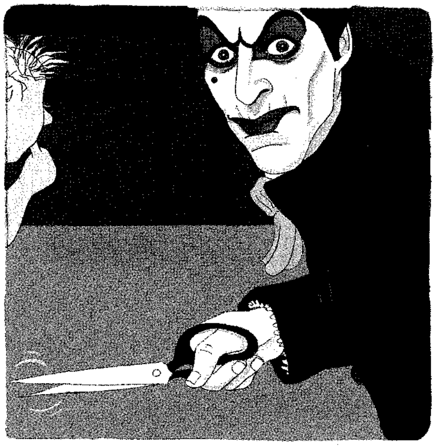
Dan Hicks and his Hot Licks have been cult figures for more than thirty years, ever since Hicks rounded up a band of expert musicians and turned out a series of albums that drew on country, jazz, vaudeville, and jug-band blues. As time went by, Hicks's old-fashioned ways gained credibility, and he staged a comeback in the mid-nineties that has lasted through the present. His new album, "Selected Shorts," has guest spots from Jimmy Buffett and Willie Nelson, among others, and it's of a piece with his definitive album, "Where's the Money?," which was released in 1971. That was a live record, which gives some sense of where the Hot Licks do their best work. (B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, Feb. 9; see Night Life.)

MR. SCIENCE

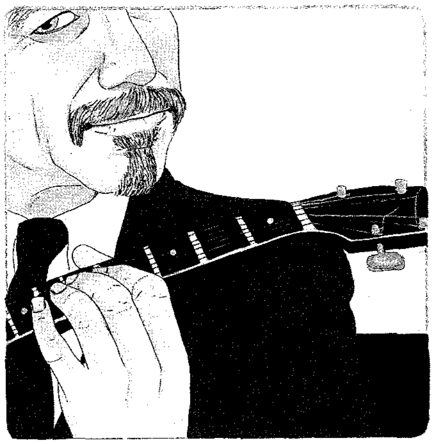
The Whitney presents a mid-career survey of the California sculptor Tim Hawkinson, notable for his love of systems and unusual materials. Works on view include clocks made out of a soda can, a manila envelope, or hair; robots that tap out percussion for hymns or write Hawkinson's signature over and over; and a silvery "elephant skin" made from felt, foam, and aluminum foil. Scale varies wildly, from tiny bird skeletons made out of nail clippings to the football-field-size "Überorgan," an automated bagpipe that will be housed in the sculpture garden at 590 Madison Avenue, at Fifty-seventh Street. (Opens Feb. 11; see Art.)

GRIMMER THAN GRIMM

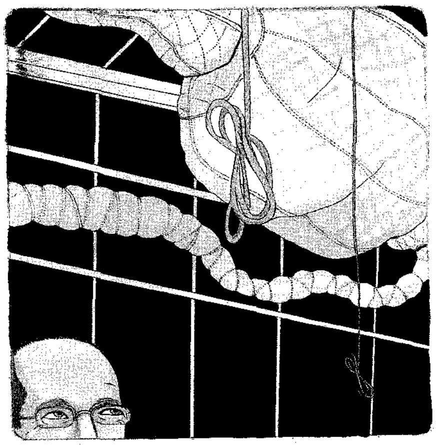
In the nightmarish and beautiful "Shockheaded Peter," players in Victorian dress act out grisly children's tales; the superb Tiger Lillies accompany them onstage with eerie, plangent music. The show sold out during its run here in 1999 and now returns with the original production—including the magical set, which evokes a child's pop-up book. (Little Shubert, previews begin Feb. 11; see Theatre.)



"Shockheaded Peter," cautionary children's tales, at the Little Shubert.



Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks play at the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill.



The West Coast sculptor Tim Hawkinson, at the Whitney.

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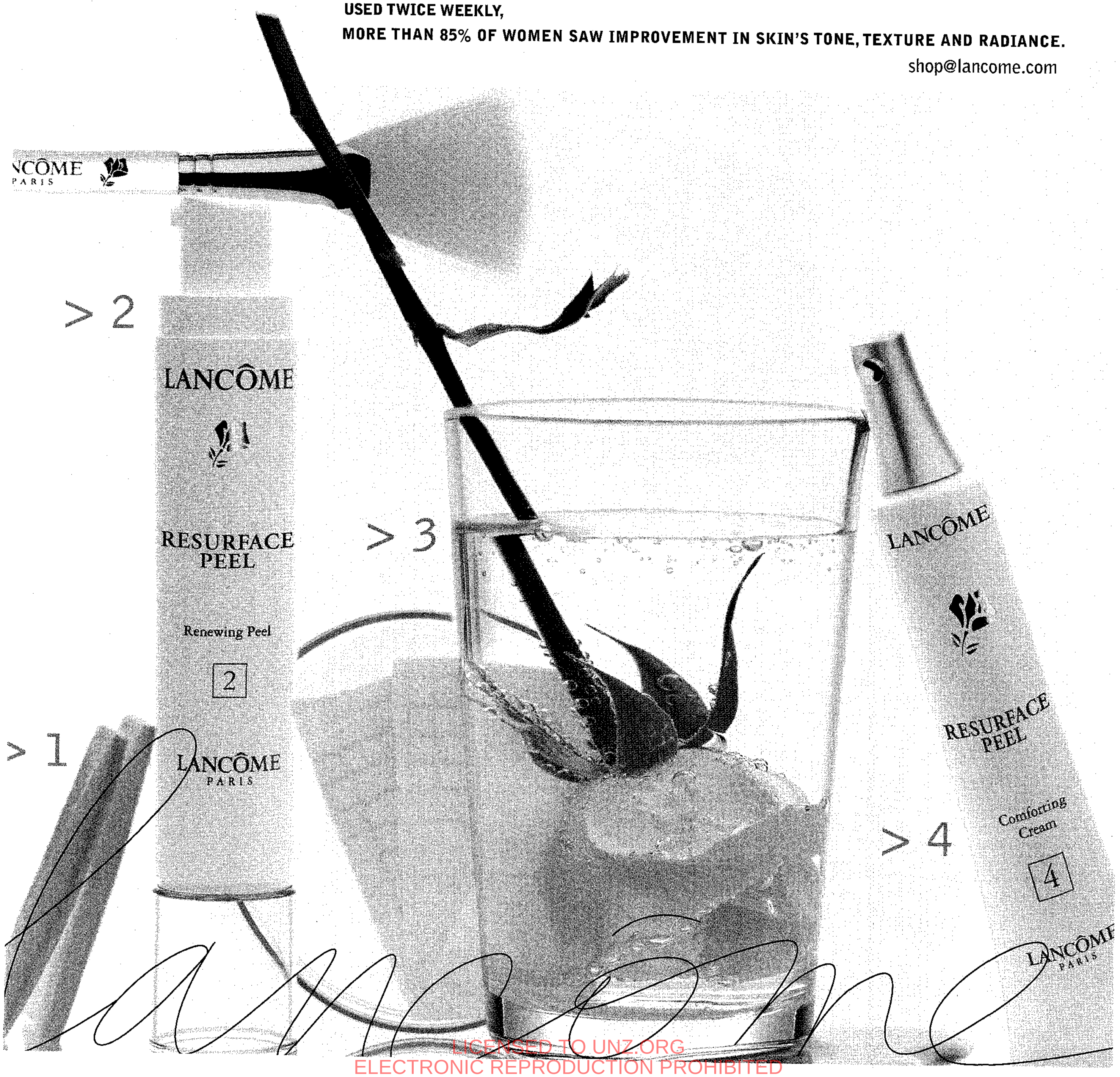
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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AFTER ASHLEY
A troubled teen (Kieran Culkin) takes on national iconic status after his mother's murder, in a new play by Gina Gionfriddo that skewers the media's glorification of tragedy. Anna Paquin costars. Directed by Terry Kinney. Previews begin Feb. 10. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

ALL WEAR BOWLERS
Geoff Sobelle, of Pig Iron Theatre Company, and Trey Lyford, of the Civilians, join forces in this existential physical comedy about silent-film clowns who fall out of the screen and find themselves stuck in a live clown act. Previews begin Feb. 17. Opens Feb. 20 at 8:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

BOOZY
Urban planning and punk rock come together for a theatrical slam dance in the newest offering by the Obie-winning young company Les Frères Corbusier ("A Very Merry Unauthorized Children's Scientology Pageant"). The show's hefty subtitle is "The Life, Death, and Subsequent Vilification of Le Corbusier and, More Importantly, Robert Moses." With original songs by Douglas J. Cohen. Directed by Alex Timbers. Previews begin Feb. 13. Opens Feb. 15 at 8. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

THE CONTROVERSY OF VALLADOLID
A new work by the French playwright Jean-Claude Carrière explores the debate in the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century on the question of whether the indigenous peoples of the Americas were human. Translated by Richard Nelson and directed by David Jones. Previews begin Feb. 15. Opens Feb. 27. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS
John Lithgow, Norbert Leo Butz, and Sherie Rene Scott star in a musical based on the Steve Martin and Michael Caine film about con men. Created by David Yazbek (music and lyrics), Jeffrey Lane (book), and Jerry Mitchell (choreography). Directed by Jack O'Brien. In previews. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

ENCORES!
"A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" is the season opener of the beloved lightly staged musical-revival series at City Center. With music by Arthur Schwartz, lyrics by Dorothy Fields, and a revised book by Eleanor Renfield (the original is by George Abbott and Betty Smith). Directed by Jack Viertel, with music direction by Rob Fisher. Feb. 10-13. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ENDGAME
Tony Roberts, Alvin Epstein, Adam Heller, and Kathryn Grody star in an Irish Repertory Theatre production of Samuel Beckett's deadpan black comedy about the end of everything. Directed by Charlotte Moore. Previews begin Feb. 15. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

GHETTO SUPERSTAR (THE MAN THAT I AM)
Billy Porter's musical memoir describes his life as a gay black man and a performer. Directed by Brad Rouse. Previews begin Feb. 10. (Joe's Pub at the Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

HAPPY DAYS
Lea DeLaria and David Greenspan star in the Worth Street Theatre Company's production of Samuel Beckett's dark farce about the emptiness of existence. Directed by Jeff Cohen. In previews. Opens Feb. 15 at 8. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

HOUSE/LIGHTS
The Wooster Group, on its thirtieth anniversary, revives its highly acclaimed 1999 show, which combines Gertrude Stein's "Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights" and Joseph Mawra's nineteen-sixties B movie, "Olga's House of Shame." Kate Valk leads the cast. Directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. In previews. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAS ISCARIOT
A new drama by Stephen Adly Guirgis ("Our Lady of 121st Street," "Jesus Hopped the A Train"), set in a quasi-modern courtroom in Purgatory, wrestles with the question of divine justice. With Eric Bogosian as Satan and Sam Rockwell as Judas. Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. Previews begin Feb. 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

The Wooster Group presents a revival of its popular show from 1999, "House/Lights," at St. Ann's Warehouse, in Dumbo.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

THE LONELY WAY
The Mint Theatre continues its love affair with the Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler with the New York première of this play, about a man who begins to wonder in middle age if his selfishness has diminished his joys. Translated from the German and adapted by Margaret Schaefer and by the Mint's artistic director, Jonathan Bank, who also directs—and who presented Schnitzler's "Far and Wide" in 2003. In previews. Opens Feb. 13 at 7. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

MC REELE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a new play by Stephen Belber ("Tape"), about a death-row inmate named Darius McReele, who is exonerated and goes on the lecture circuit after a journalist makes him a cause célèbre. Starring Anthony Mackie. Directed by Doug Hughes ("Doubt"). In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS: THE MUSICAL!
This exuberant sendup of the genre, written by Eric Rockwell and Joanne Bogart, with music by Rockwell and lyrics by Bogart, begins an open run, following two sold-out seasons. Directed by Pamela Hunt. In previews. Opens Feb. 10 at 8. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

ON THE MOUNTAIN
Named for the working title of Kurt Cobain's final song, Christopher Shinn's new drama tells the story of an aging rock-and-roll wild child who is haunted by the memory of her dead lover, a Seattle rock legend. Starring Amy Ryan, Alison Pill, and Ebon Moss-Bachrach. Directed by Jo Bonney ("Fat Pig"). In previews. (Playwrights Horizons Mainstage, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ROMANCE
The Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new play by David Mamet (one of the company's founders), a courtroom comedy set in the present day. With Larry Bryggman and Bob Balaban. Directed by Neil Pepe. Previews begin Feb. 9. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

SHOCKHEADED PETER
The theatrical retelling of children's cautionary tales returns to New York. Previews begin Feb. 11. Opens Feb. 22 at 7 (see This Week). (Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

SPAMALOT
The Monty Python musical stars David Hyde Pierce, Tim Curry, and Hank Azaria. Book by Eric Idle; music and lyrics by Idle and John Du Prez. Directed by Mike Nichols. In previews. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BELFAST BLUES
Geraldine Hughes becomes a living history book in her dazzling one-woman show, which shows the audience how simple people scraped by—or didn't—in war-torn Belfast in the seventies and eighties. She animates a couple dozen friends and family members (and her young self) with pathos but without schmaltz. Her eyes, which an American film producer called "Belfast blue" (hence the title), got her a part in a movie as a kid. They are like the too lucid eyes of the child on the cover of the U2 "War" album: the eyes of a witness. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

BROOKLYN BOY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Donald Margulies ("Dinner with Friends"), about a writer whose character is changed by success. With Adam Arkin and Polly Draper. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
Christopher McElroen directs his adaptation of the Chekhov drama for the Classical Theatre of Harlem. Earle Hyman and Wendell Pierce lead the cast. (H.S.A. Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444. Through Feb. 27.)

COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW
In this polished revival of Elmer Rice's 1931 drama, the Tony-winning actor John Rubinstein gives a dynamic performance as a Jewish society lawyer in a profession dominated by white-shoe Wasps. He has raised himself from humble roots by defending unscrupulous wealthy clients, and he has a secret of his own: he once helped cook an alibi to save a friend. When a rival lawyer threatens to expose his past, Rubinstein shows the human fire within the man of the law. With an elegant monochrome set (featuring a stunning nineteen-thirties skyline) by Chris Jones. Directed by Dan Wackerman. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-868-4444. Through March 6.)

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Harvey Fierstein has taken over the role of Tevye in David Leveaux's elegant production of the classic musical about the troubles of a Russian Jewish peasant family in 1905. Fierstein's voice sounds like a klezmer clarinet, alternating between reso-

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nant froggy lows and leering reedy highs—it's memorable, but not quite in keeping with "Tradition." Andrea Martin, as Golde, is appropriately wifely. (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE FLID SHOW
New Directions Theatre presents a play by Richard Willett about a British thalidomide baby who grows up to be a cabaret singer. The production stars the British actor Mat Fraser, who himself is a victim of the drug. Directed by Eliza Beckwith. (Medicine Show Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101. Through Feb. 26.)

GOOD VIBRATIONS
Following the trend started by "Mamma Mia!," this musical stitches together the songs of the Beach Boys with a story inspired by the group's lyrics. The plot is hardly original—it's basically "Grease" on surfboards—but winning young performers, tight pacing, and the irresistible charm of Brian Wilson's songs bring the endless summer to the dead of winter. Directed and choreographed by John Carrafa. (Eugene O'Neill Theatre, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

HURLYBURLY
Ethan Hawke and Bobby Cannavale star in the New Group's revival of David Rabe's 1984 play. Directed by Scott Elliott. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

LITTLE WOMEN
In this glib musical production of the Louisa May Alcott classic about four sisters in the Civil War era, Maureen McGovern (as Marmee, their mother) gives a stirring rendition of the ballad "Days of Plenty," and Sutton Foster shines as Jo, particularly in the made-for-schoolgirls anthem "Astonishing." But the show's under-nuanced, anachronistic book turns Jo into a strident, sitcom-variety showboat and flattens her sisters into caricatures. The most remarkable aspect of this frustrating production is that the death of Beth (Megan McGinnis), tragic in the novel and the film versions, comes here as a relief, as it brings an end to the insipid lyrics she is forced to sing. Book by Allan Knee, lyrics by Mindi Dickstein, and music by Jason Howland. Directed by Susan H. Schulman. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

TABLES FOR TWO

PORCUPINE
20 Prince St. (212-966-8886)—At Porcupine, which has opened in the downtown spot that Mix It briefly occupied, the transition happened so swiftly that the owners simply kept the generic bistro décor. There are just a few distinguishing touches, like a long communal oak table next to the windows and a deceptively hefty menu filled with blank pages. More important, the chef, Matt Weingarten, has eschewed his predecessor's anything-and-everything credo, which had pad Thai vying with steak and eggs, in favor of a carefully minimalist selection.

Appetizers are generously portioned, and one could be happy making a meal of them. There's roasted cauliflower, set in a pool of walnut pesto and accompanied by tart cherries soaked in port, and sweet-lettuce soup spiked by pleasantly chewy lemon tapioca pearls. The real star is the dish of parchment-roasted mushrooms, served in a puffed-up packet and opened tableside. One evening the scissor-wielding waiter leaned briefly over the fragrant steam and grinned. "It's so much fun, we fight over who gets to do it," he said. They're buttery, herbed, and woodsy, and just as good on their own as they are wrapped in the chestnut crêpes that accompany them.

The entrées aren't quite so assiduously complex. A waiter mumbled a bit when asked to describe the *fumet* that accompanied the salmon recently. "Um, it's kind of smoky," he said. It came to the table in a visually stunning arrangement—pink fish flesh set in an inky sauce—but the flavor was wan. Better was the rotolo, a rolled pasta available in either a half or full-size portion and filled with ricotta cheese and savory roasted tomatoes. After all this, dessert seems to be an excess that the modest Porcupine can hardly countenance. One evening, the waiter gingerly set down a dessert menu, murmuring apologies for the presumption, and the selection was spare. The flaky ricotta-and-chocolate torte, though, proved too great a temptation. When less is more, sometimes you just want more. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner and Mondays for dinner. Entrées $17-$25.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

SABINA
Marin Ireland ("4:48 Psychosis," "Far Away") has a fresh, guileless appearance that heightens the impact of the dark roles she chooses. Her powerful performance anchors Willy Holtzman's play about Sabina Spielrein, an emotionally disturbed patient of Jung's whose obsession with Wagner's "Ring" cycle informed Jung's theories on mythology and whose cure brought Jung to the attention of Freud. Jung (Victor Slezak) and Freud (Peter Strauss) jockey for dominance, using Sabina as a tool for their own status, abandoning her once she is no longer useful to them. The play includes fine live violin accompaniment by Batya MacAdam-Somer. Directed by Ethan McSweeny. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Feb. 27.)

SHYLOCK
In a one-man show that mingles historical narration with dramatic reënactments, the Welsh playwright and actor Gareth Armstrong investigates the character and social world of Shakespeare's moneylender. Bringing together facts about European anti-Semitism from the Middle Ages to the present and expanding the role of Tubal, Shylock's only friend (who has a mere eight lines in "The Merchant of Venice"), Armstrong deepens the context of Shylock's hunger for revenge. Directed by Frank Barrie. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

SLEEPING BEAUTY
London's Young Vic Theatre Company brings its inventive, richly visual staging of Charles Perrault's classic to New York in a production that accents the dark side of the fairy tale and is meant for both young and grownup audiences. Directed by Rufus Norris. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Through Feb. 27.)

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)
In fits and starts, the title character of Will Eno's new play, played by James Urbaniak, unspools painful memories—a dead dog, a lost girlfriend, inner fears. In a flare of matchlight, we glimpse Urbaniak's face, with its sharp angles and deep shadows. The light is extinguished before we can see the whole man. This partial revelation, followed by frustration, is central to the method of the playwright Will Eno; his monologue owes a debt to early Albee. There are just a few actors who could hold an audience with such oblique revelations. Urbaniak, in an authoritative performance, succeeds, lending the underground man a wintry humor. Directed by Hal Brooks. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
A new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin sets the travails of six young orthographic geniuses and their anxious adult entourages to music. Directed by James Lapine. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

ALSO PLAYING

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DEMOCRACY
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.

FAT PIG
Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. (Closes Feb. 26.)

THE GODS ARE POUNDING MY HEAD! (LUMBERJACK MESSIAHS)
Ontological Theatre at St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

LONE STAR LOVE
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.

A NUMBER
New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. (Through Feb. 13.)

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

700 SUNDAYS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.

TWELVE ANGRY MEN
American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

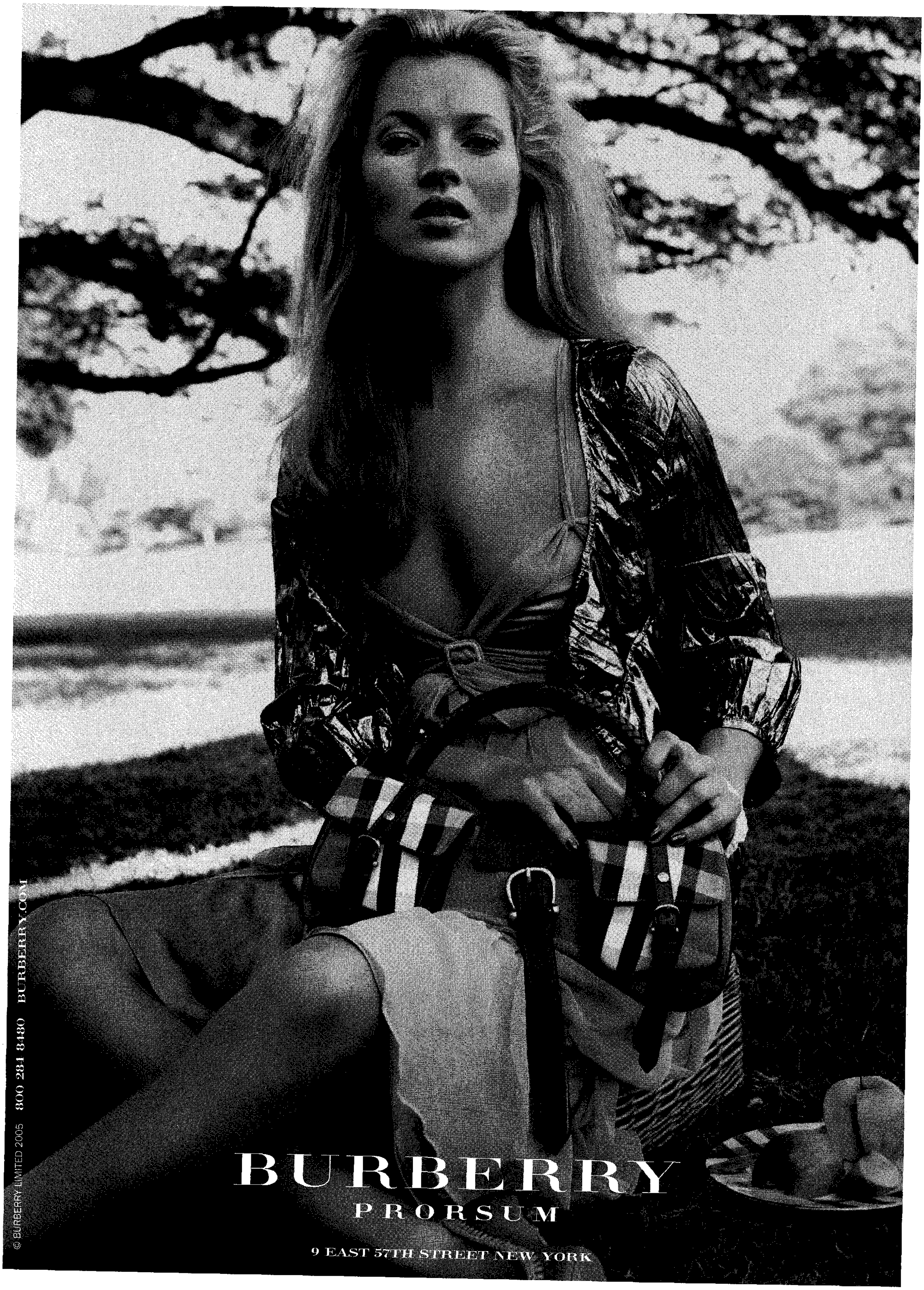
DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The next two weeks feature four performances of Balanchine's lovely diadem "Jewels"—made up of "Emeralds," "Rubies," and "Diamonds" and set to Fauré, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky. Also entering the calendar is last year's crowd-pleasing two-part silent-movie melodrama by Susan Stroman, "Double Feature." ♦ Feb. 8 at 7:30: "Mozartiana," "Thou Swell," and "The Four Seasons." ♦ Feb. 9 and Feb. 17 at 8, Feb. 12 at 2, and Feb. 15 at 7:30: "Jewels." ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: "Chichester Psalms," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Andantino," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ Feb. 11 at 8: "Apollo," "Chichester Psalms," "Eros Piano," and "Shambards." ♦ Feb. 12 at 8 (an all-Robbins program): "Fanfare," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Andantino," and "The Four Seasons." ♦ Feb. 13 at 3: "Mozartiana," "Concerto for Two Solo Pianos," "Liturgy," and "Glass Pieces." ♦ Feb. 16 at 8: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Shambards," and "Glass Pieces." ♦ Feb. 18 at 8, Feb. 19 at 2 and 8, Feb. 20 at 3, and Feb. 22 at 7:30: "Double Feature." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

KEIGWIN + COMPANY
The 92nd Street Y's Harkness Dance Project kicks off this year with the rising talent Larry Keigwin. In his engrossing new piece, "Natural Selection," dancers scurry through a tunnel of back-bending torsos, up each other's bodies, or up a wall (with assistance), propelled by Michael Gordon's driving score and by some unspecified danger. Presented with a funny-sad sex study, "Mattress Suite," and the New York premières of "Angels of Anxiety," to a Philip Glass score, and Keigwin's first work, "10th Floor," from 1992. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Feb. 16-17 at 8, Feb. 19 at 8, and Feb. 20 at 2 and 7.)

VINCENT MANTSOE
In the centerpiece of the South African artist's intense solo "Ndaa," rattles quiver, hoarse voices cry out, and Mantsoe starts to move. The focal point of his choreography is his waist, as he bends in half, crouches, or pulls his knees up. "Ndaa" proves that he can hold an audience without theatrics or props, while "Motswa Hole," which shares the bill, shows his flirtatious side. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 10-12 at 7:30.)

CATHY WEIS PROJECTS
For sheer imagination, it's hard to beat the blithe Cathy Weis. Her "Electric Haiku" concept—a series of minuets for performer and technology—returns for a second season. This time, the cast includes four Bessie winners: Weis, the longtime Trisha Brown dancer Diane Madden, Circus Amok's Jennifer Miller, and the series regular Scott Heron. Weis plays fast and loose with genres, but her attention to detail is steadfast in a show that includes a ventriloquist's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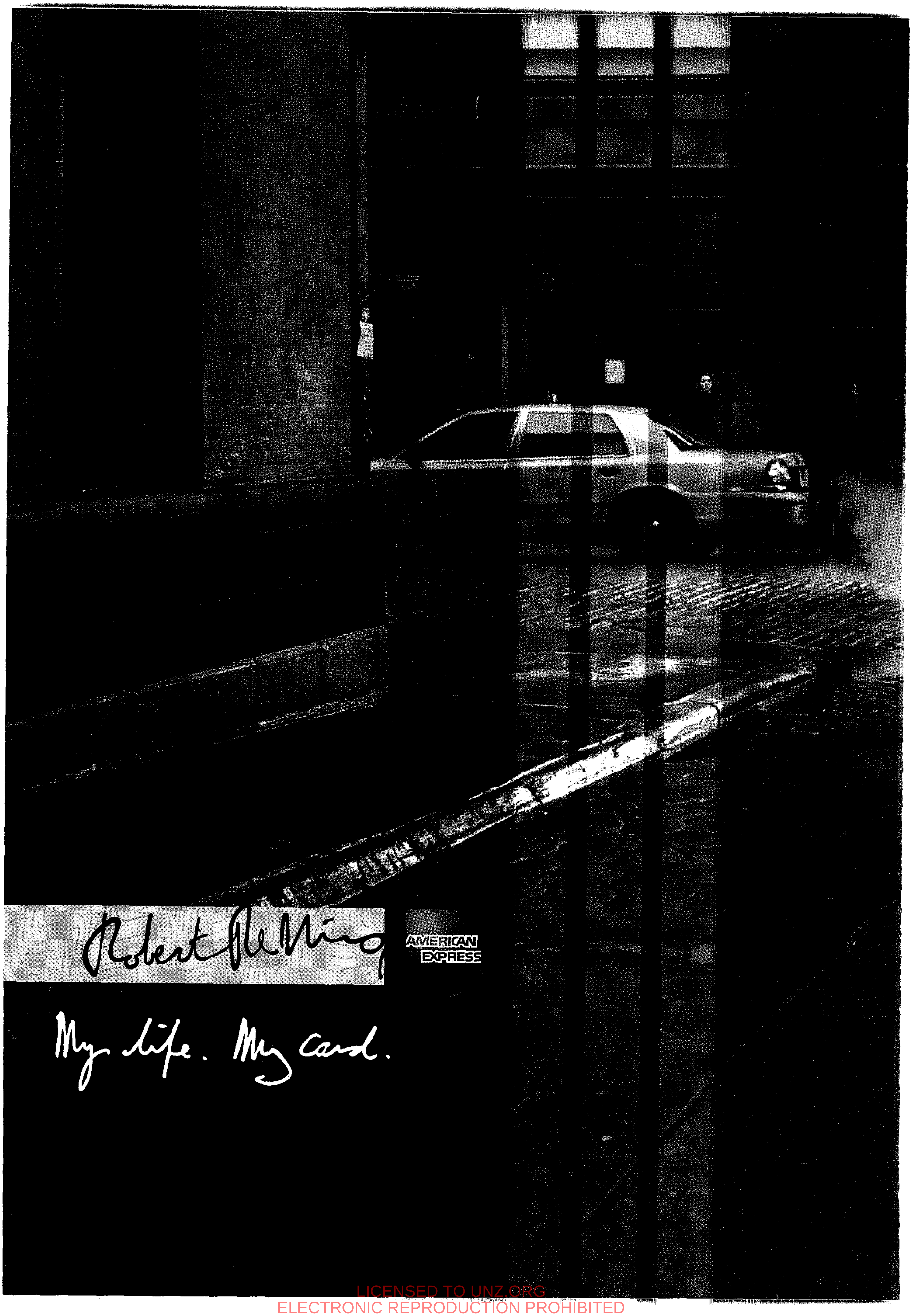
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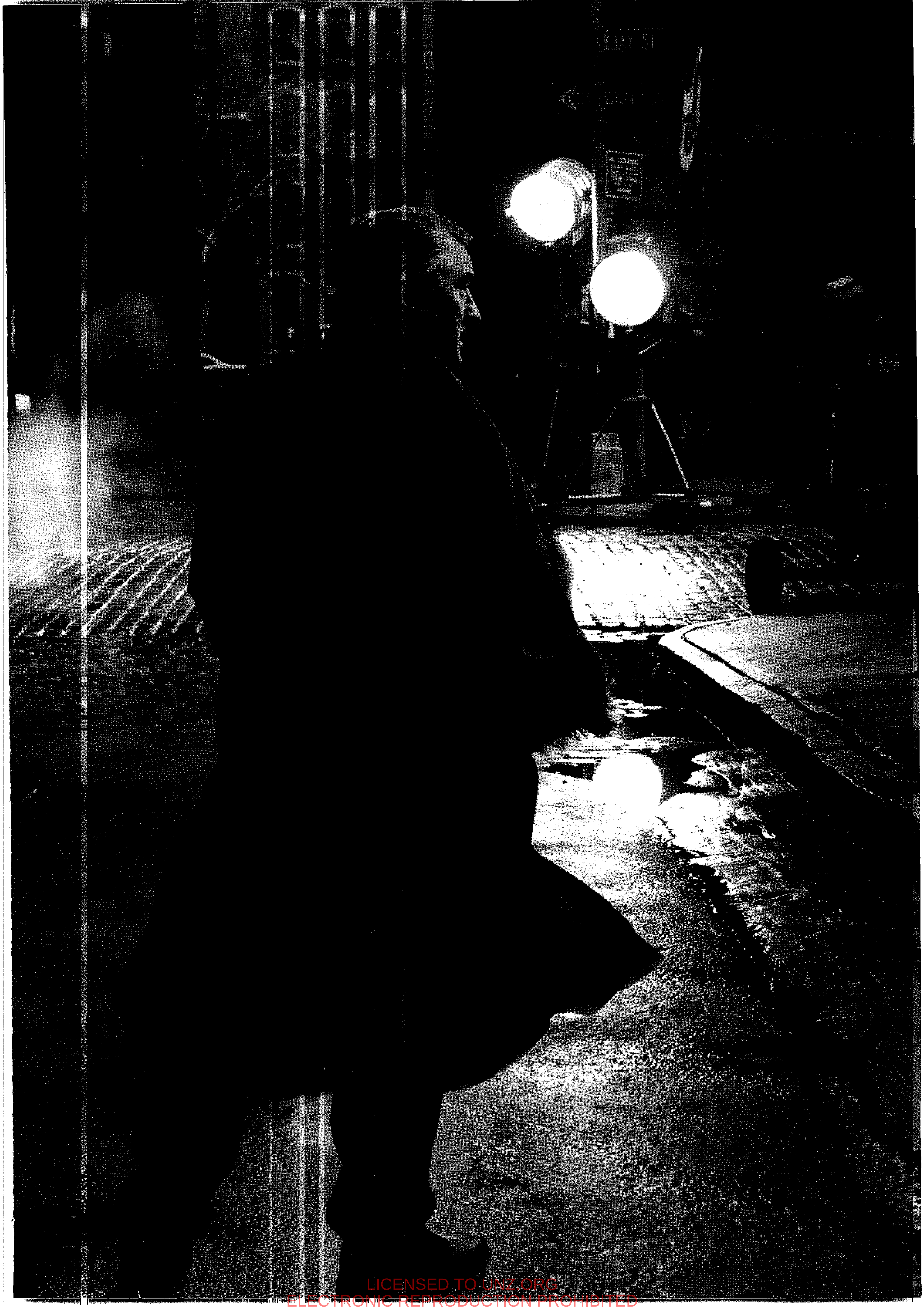
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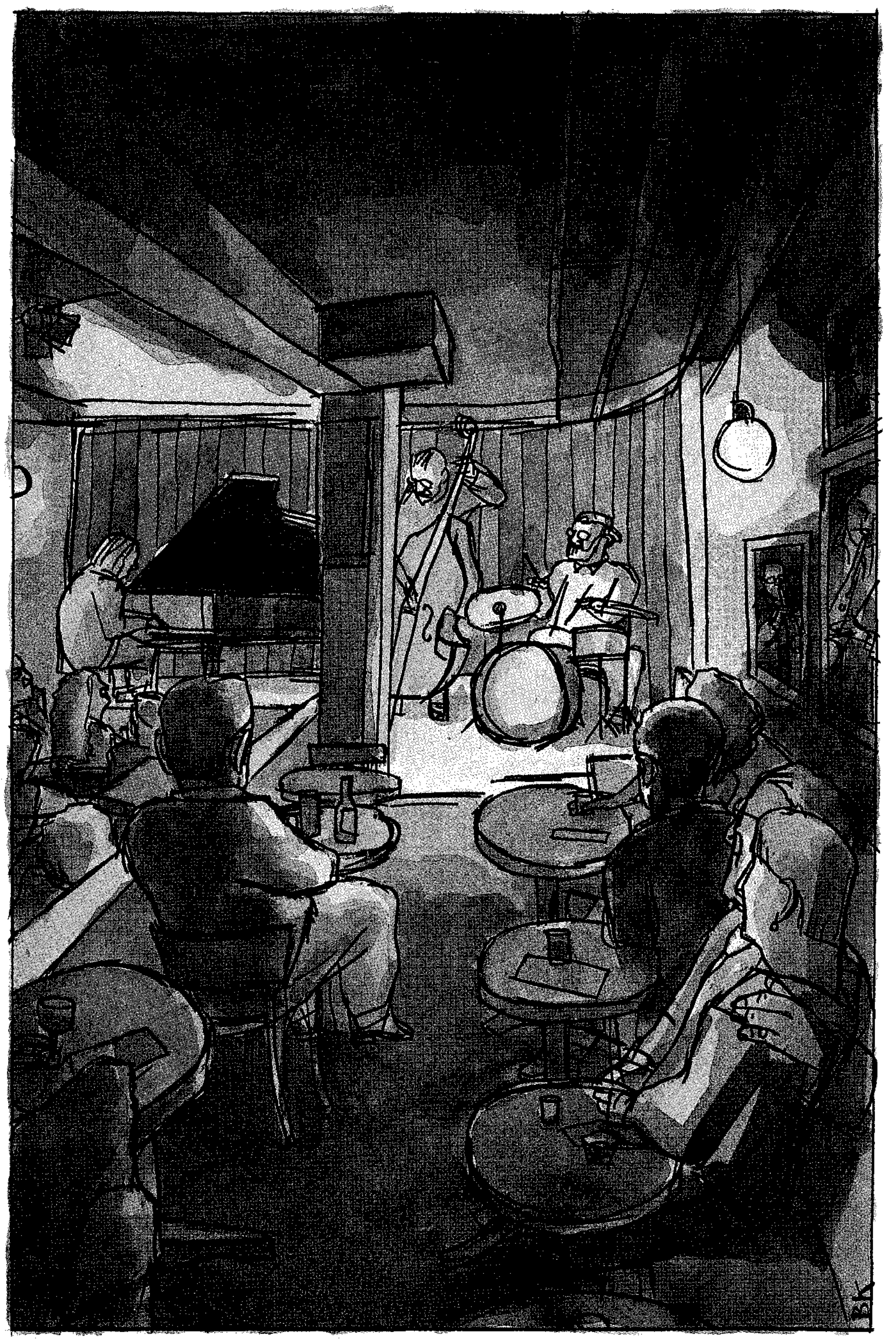

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BEN KATCHOR

dummy, kung fu, floor-length gowns, and a washtub bass. With lighting by Jennifer Tipton and a soundscape mixed live onstage by Steve Hamilton. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 16-22 at 7:30. Through Feb. 26.)

BEIJING MODERN DANCE COMPANY
The ten-year-old troupe, which has creative ties to the more established Guangdong Modern Dance Company, makes its New York début with the evening-length piece "Rear Light," inspired by the Pink Floyd album "The Wall." Created by the husband-and-wife choreographers Li Han-Zhong and Ma Bo, the piece replaces the original "Wall" story with an oblique investigation of conformity and freedom, in which flashes of inventive movement and intimacy are overwhelmed by bright lights and crowded ensemble pieces evoking the mindless masses. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 8-11 at 8, Feb. 12 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 13 at 2 and 7:30.)

TORONTO DANCE THEATRE
Christopher House's "Sly Verb," having its U.S. première at the Joyce, uses flesh as provocation. Nude bodies undulate inside cages of cold silver wire. Later, in a live video projection, a girl's skin is squeezed between calipers, and her finger is pricked. Restless, uncomfortable solos give way to vigorous ensemble sections that incorporate everything from meditation to the hand jive to dancing the jig. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 15-18 at 8, Feb. 19 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 20 at 2 and 7:30.)

CAROLYN DORFMAN DANCE
The flight of Brazilian Jews to New York in 1654 provides the narrative for Dorfman's "Odisea," the newest entry in a body of recent work that earnestly explores religious and folk aspects of the Jewish experience. The guest choreographer Aidan Treays offers the première of "Enigmotion," an ensemble piece set in a mythical birch forest. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Feb. 10-11 at 8 and Feb. 12 at 2 and 8.)

MOISEYEV DANCE COMPANY
At ninety-eight, Igor Moiseyev may finally be slowing down. For the first time in its sixty-nine-year history, his theatricalized folk-dance company performs commissioned work by another choreographer—a traditional Korean dance by Pe In Su. The rest of the program features Moiseyev's arrangements of Finnish, Mexican, and Argentine dances, a sweet new gem from Moldavia, and his masterpiece, "Partisans," set in the Second World War, about mountain men in the Caucasus who fought the Nazis. The boisterous acrobatics of the troupe's seventy-odd dancers may be kitschy, but they're spectacular. (Walt Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. Feb. 12 at 8.)

BILL SHANNON: "SKETCHY"
In a show at the Kitchen, the hip-hop dance virtuoso on custom-made crutches presents a study of unperfected ("sketchy") moves. During a lecture-demonstration uncharacteristically short on astonishment, the Crutchmaster and his dancers try out new maneuvers, mostly fail, then use video replay to analyze what went wrong. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Feb. 17-19 at 8.)

RONALD K. BROWN/EVIDENCE DANCE COMPANY
In his new "Dance for Peace," Brown adds American Sign Language to his rich, original blend of African and modern dance vocabularies. Created for Juilliard students and set to a Kronos Quartet rendition of a Terry Riley score, the work now has its company première, as part of the "651 Arts" series. The program also includes Brown's 2003 Nina Simone tribute, "Come Ye." (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Feb. 11 at 8.)

"STARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY"
This year's international ballet gala showcases the Royal Ballet's sublime Alina Cojocaru and the Kirov's speedy Diana Vishneva, along with dancers from the Bolshoi, Paris Opéra Ballet, Munich Ballet, New York City Ballet, and our own international troupe, American Ballet Theatre. Breaking with precedent, the program includes a classic of modern dance: Martha Graham's "Steps in the Street," staged by Yuriko. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-307-4100. Feb. 14 at 7:30.)

"MY PRICE POINT"
Mike Albo's Zeitgeist-driven monologue-and-dance show has its final week. Directed by David Schweizer. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. Feb. 10-12 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 5.)

20TH ANNUAL LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL OF CHINESE DANCE, MUSIC AND PEKING OPERA
The Chinese Folk Dance Company ushers in the Year of the Rooster (which begins on February 9) with colorful costumes, bells, swords, and drums, which are deployed in five new dances: "Lullaby," "Double Happiness," "Dan Jue," "Our Father, Our Mother," and "Yellow Earth." (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-992-8484. Feb. 12 at 2 and 7:30 and Feb. 13 at 2.)

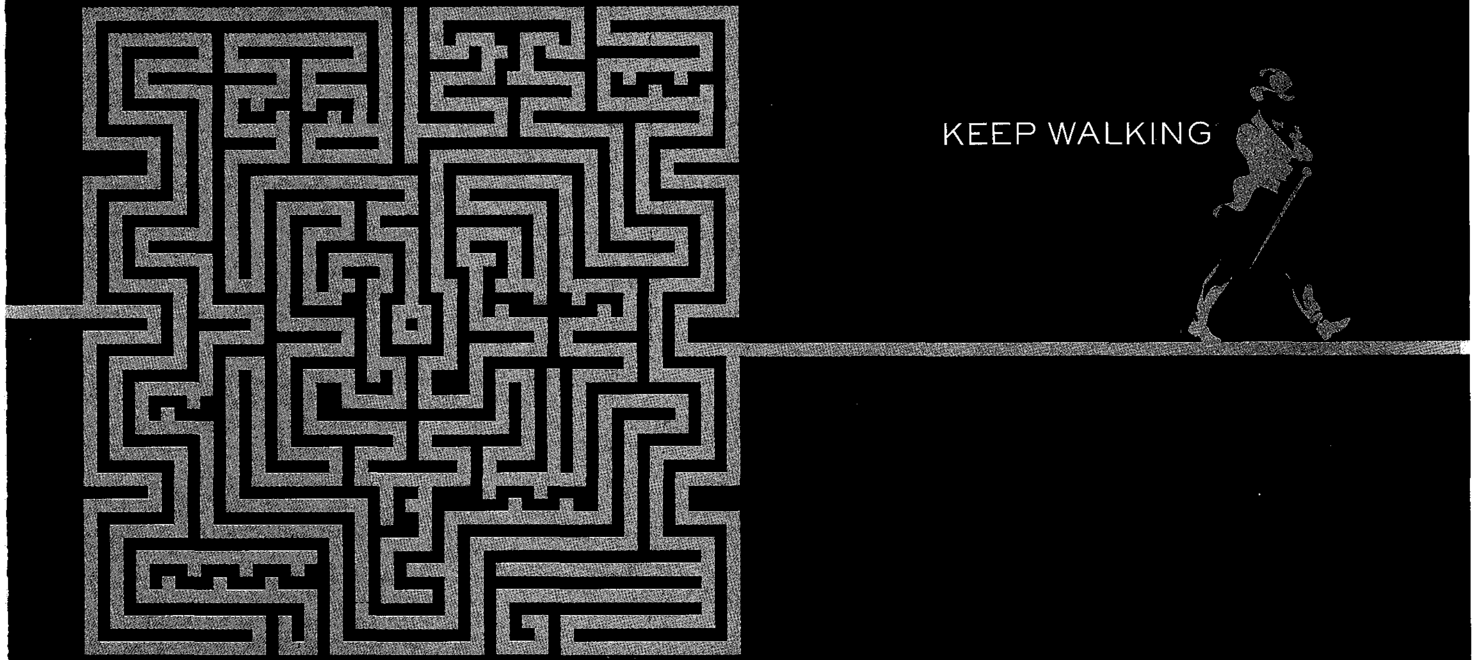
"CINDERELLA"
New York Theatre Ballet's finely wrought productions are tailored for children and run about an hour long. The fairy tale, set to Prokofiev's score, is choreographed by Donald Mahler and features the dashing young Steven Melendez as Prince Charming. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. Feb. 12 and 13 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)

"DENDRON"
Mark Jarecke presents an in-the-round piece on the subject of man's relationship to his environment, performed by and created with Andrea Johnston, Molly Poerstel, and Netta Yerushalmy. Part of Danspace's "City/Dans" series. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Feb. 10-13 at 8:30.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

TIBET HOUSE BENEFIT CONCERT
Philip Glass, Trey Anastasio, Marc Anthony Thompson, Nellie McKay, and other concerned citizens work to free Tibet. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 9 at 7:30.)

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
Feb. 9 at 8:30: "Casino Paradise" (see Classical). (Allen Room.) Feb. 10 at 8:30: **Rosanne Cash** brings a little bit of country to the big city. (Allen Room.) (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)



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A portfolio of *The New Yorker's* Eustace Tilley, from the past eighty years.

Mark Singer discusses his thirty years at the magazine.

Jane Mayer talks about outsourcing torture.

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A decade of New Yorker Film Notes.

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A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

MOE.
The long-running upstate New York jam band hosts a tsunami benefit show. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Feb. 10 at 8.)

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
The Heath Brothers, featuring the saxophonist Jimmy, the bassist Percy, and the drummer Albert, give family unity a good name. The blues-belting Kevin Mahogany rounds out the bill. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. Feb. 10 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Feb. 10 at 8:30: A night of solo flamenco guitar with José María Gallardo and Cañizares. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall.) Feb. 11 at 8:30: The flamenco vocalist Mayte Martín. (Zankel Hall.) Feb. 12 at 8: The flamenco singer Enrique Morente performs with the guitarist Tomatito for the first time in public. (Carnegie Hall.) Feb. 13 at 8: The Spanish vocalists Carmen Linares, Miguel Poveda, and Arcángel. (Carnegie Hall.) Feb. 19 at 8: The Ilyas Malayev Ensemble and the Roshel Amin Ensemble play court music from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) (For more information about all shows, call 212-545-7536.)

"LET'S FALL IN LOVE"
Harold Arlen, the man who provided indelible melodies for everything from "Stormy Weather" and "I've Got the World on a String" to "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive" and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," has provided the soundtrack to countless romances, making Valentine's Day a logical time to mark his centennial. Lea DeLaria, Faith Prince, John Pizzarelli, Tom Wopat, Simone, Ann Hampton Callaway, and other Broadway and cabaret stars do the honors. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 14 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Feb. 17-19 at 7:30: The pianist **Bill Charlap,** who has enormous affection for and scholarly knowledge of the Great American Songbook, is here with his trio, which will be augmented by the saxophonist **Frank Wess,** the guitarist **Peter Bernstein,** and the singers **Freddy Cole** and **Sandy Stewart** (who happens to be Charlap's mother). (Allen Room.) Feb. 17-19 at 8: Paul Whiteman, known as "the King of Jazz" in the nineteen-twenties, was an avatar of the big-band era who expanded his ensembles to symphonic size (at one point the rhythm section alone included two pianos, tuba, bass sax, string bass, banjo, and guitar). Despite his popularity, he was dethroned during the swing era and is largely forgotten today. The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra,** aided by the excellent vocalist **Daryl Sherman,** the fine clarinettist **Bob Wilber,** and the industrious tuba player **Vince Giordano,** resurrect Whiteman's sumptuous music. (Rose Theatre.) (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Rob Curto, a New York-based accordion, organ, and piano virtuoso, is best known for playing *forró,* the backcountry dance music from northwestern Brazil—think samba meets zydeco with a twist of merengue—but he also has strong roots in jazz. On Feb. 10, Curto fronts a new band, the **Accordion Power Trio,** for a night of upbeat, genre-bending songs that fuse musical traditions from around the world. Feb. 11: **Ken Waldman,** a fiddler and poet from Alaska. Feb. 18: Hawaiian swing with the **Moonlighters.**

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Feb. 9: **Dan Hicks and the Hot Licks** (see This Week). Feb. 10: The Texas blues guitarist **Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown's** been battling lung cancer, but he's still mixing elements of country, Cajun, and jazz. Feb. 11: The underground Bronx rapper **Kool Keith** is known for multiple pseudonyms and a lyrically surreal, Joycean style. Feb. 12: **Bo Diddley** and his signature beat. Feb. 16: The local death-metal ensemble **Suffocation** traffics in punishing heavy rock. Leather-clad purists may find it intricate and subtle, but most others will find themselves scrambling for the exit.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Feb. 13-14: The Canadian neo-country singer **Neko Case.** With the **Sadies,** who won't be leaving the stage at the end of their set—they're also Case's backing band. Feb. 16: The "stoner rock" trio **High on Fire** bulldozes the barriers between heavy metal, punk, thrash, and grunge. Feb. 22: Like their Scottish mates in Franz Ferdinand, the **Futureheads** are part of a new breed of British indie bands set on reviving the angular guitar style of eighties post-punk. The band fuses the dissonant funk of the Gang of Four with the jittery pulse of vintage XTC.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (212-533-7000)—Feb. 11-12: The versatile local tribute ensemble the **Loser's Lounge** hoist their glasses to the British rock gods Queen. The **Charles Mingus Orchestra** still packs them in every Thursday.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Feb. 9: Often mistaken for the punk poetess with a slightly different name, the vocalist **Patty Smyth** was once briefly married to a punk rocker (the fearsome Richard Hell), but her own music has always been rooted firmly in pop. Smyth, now married to the tennis curmudgeon John McEnroe, has re-formed her band, Scandal, after twenty years; expect songs like "Goodbye to You" and "The Warrior," which made them an MTV staple in the early eighties.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Feb. 20: The Texas-bred troubadour **Jimmie Dale Gilmore.** Feb. 22: For the past ten years, Tommy Grenas and Len Del Rio, along with various collaborators, have been crafting solidly inventive albums of electronic rock under the name **Anubian Lights.** Their latest partner is Adele Bertei, the downtown icon (the Bloods, James Chance and the Contortions) who now fronts the trio.

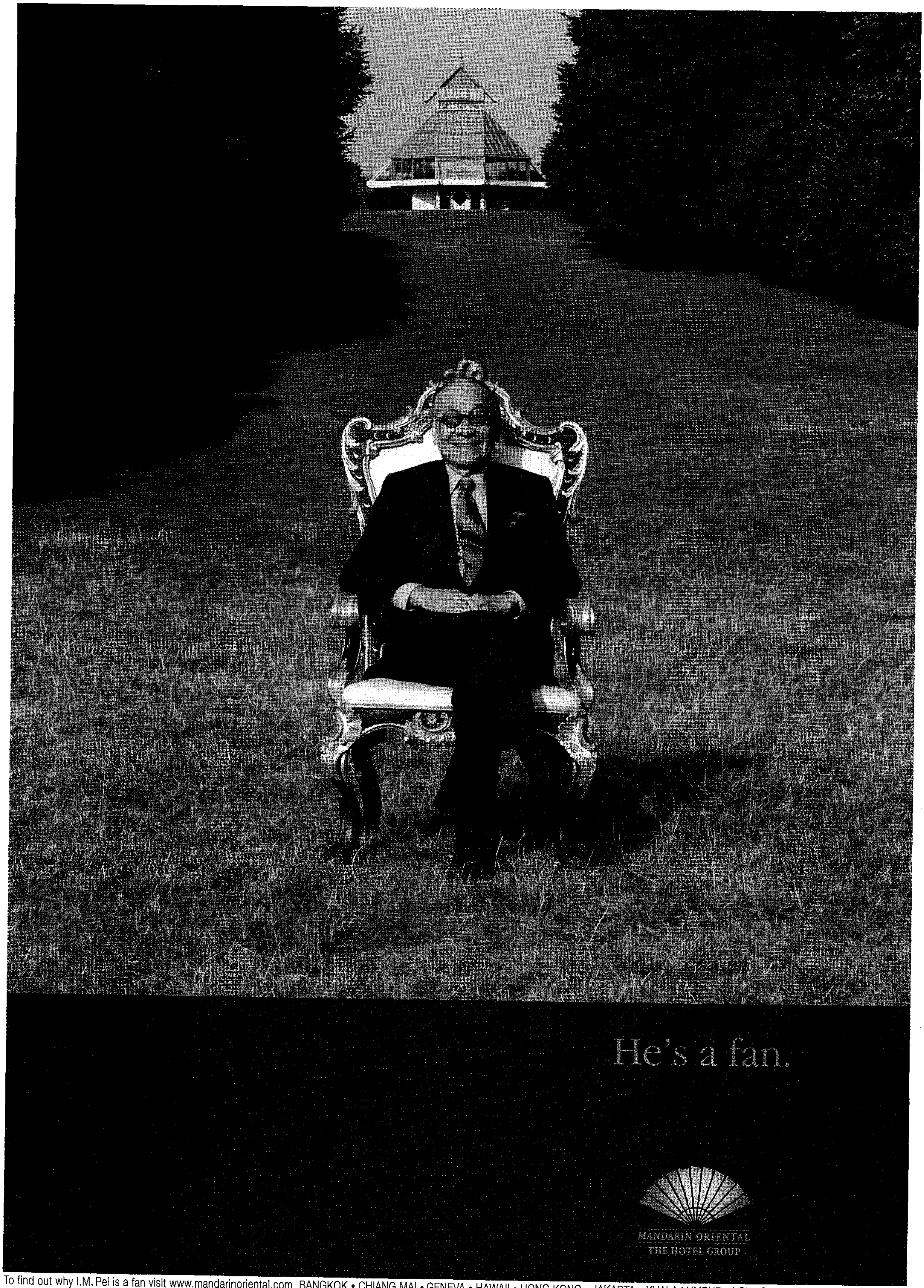
NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Feb. 12: The **Kaiser Chiefs** are the latest U.K. outfit to send English record buyers and music journalists into a sweaty frenzy. In its short history, the Leeds five-piece has charted with two singles of ripe guitar pop, "Oh My God" and "I Predict a Riot," and the group's front man, Ricky Wilson, has been compared to Johnny Rotten and Damon Albarn.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—You can often judge a person by the company she keeps, and the same is true for bands. **Bonfire Madigan** is a little string outfit led by the dynamic cellist Madigan Shive, who likes touring with the industrial-rock pioneers Laibach, so it's not surprising that she stirs up a ruckus. Bonfire Madigan is here Tuesdays this month.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Feb. 13 at 2: **C. J. Chenier,** the son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, upholds the traditions of that Creole dance music. Chenier the younger straps on his father's old fifty-pound piano-key accordion and leads his Red Hot Louisiana Band through a repertory of waltzes, two-steps, and joist-shaking rhythms guaranteed to make dancers kick off their shoes. Feb. 14: **Rachelle Garniez and the Fortunate Few.** Garniez, a local singer-songwriter who also plays the accordion, wanders through the genres of country, jazz, and pop, leaving behind nothing but sweet wreckage. She has a richly compelling voice, a wild imagination, and a backing band that includes the guitarist Matt Munisteri and the pianist and saxophonist Joe Ruddick.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Feb. 19: **Jorge Ben Jor,** the great Brazilian guitarist and one of the pioneers of tropicalia, a genre developed in the late sixties that infused Brazilian pop with American rock and roll, among other influences.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Feb. 14: The **Syd Straw Heartwreck Show.** The gifted vocalist who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first made her name with the Golden Palominos, along with **Marc Ribot, Chris Stamey,** and others, turns out for a Valentine's Day performance.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Feb. 9: The Plug Awards, the newish multi-genre music-industry accolades with a populist bent (fans vote online), celebrates its winners and nominees. The d.j. **RJD2,** the rapper **Aesop Rock,** and the rock antihero **Ted Leo** are among those slated to perform.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Feb. 26: The vocalist **KT Sullivan** and the pianist and entertainer **Mark Nadler** celebrate the centennial of Jule Styne, the composer of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," "Everything's Coming Up Roses," and other favorites.

Rachelle Garniez brings her band the Fortunate Few to Satalla (see Night Life).

CASS BIRD

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Feb. 9-12: **Lee Konitz** is here with a trio, which will reveal the alto saxophonist's deliciously dry tone and pared-down improvisational approach in all its glory. Feb. 16-19: The Russian saxophonist **Igor Butman** steps out with his jazz orchestra.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Feb. 15-20: The singer **Carol Sloane** always sounds better in the presence of the pianist **Norman Simmons,** a longtime associate who will beef up his trio with the saxophonist **Eric Alexander** and the guitarist **Paul Bollenback.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Feb. 19: The Broadway luminary **Brian Stokes Mitchell** sings love songs.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Feb. 17-20: The **Cecil Taylor Big Band.** Although Taylor can generate the power of a big band even when he plays solo, the perennially avant-garde pianist likes to surround himself with a phalanx of horns and other instruments. Depending on your outlook, the din that arises is either a delight or a personal affront. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through Feb. 27: The legendary vocalist **Ruth Brown.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Feb. 9-10: Until jazz ensembles start regularly incorporating oud, tuba, and acoustic guitar into their lineups, Henry Threadgill's adventurous **Zooid** will remain outside the mainstream, but that's where Threadgill seems most comfortable anyway. Feb. 9-12: The drummer Bobby Previte and the guitarist Charlie Hunter are a pair of sonic adventurers who call themselves **Groundtruther.** Here they're joined by **DJ Olive.**

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Feb. 11-12: The **Rashied Ali** quartet. John Coltrane's last drummer will turn seventy this year, and he is still kicking out the jams without apologies. Feb. 18-19: The saxophonist **Gary Bartz** goes head to head with the cellist **Akua Dixon.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Practically every important jazz musician from Coleman Hawkins to Ornette Coleman has played the Vanguard, earning it a hallowed place in the history of the music. Those that frequent its subterranean corners are familiar with another legendary element of the club—its present owner, Lorraine Gordon, and her no-nonsense managerial style (some eight years ago, she says, she wouldn't allow Henry Kissinger to enter without paying the standard admission charge). The Vanguard celebrates its seventieth birthday with a different top-drawer act each night, starting Feb. 15, in the following order: **Roy Hargrove, Wynton Marsalis,** the **Bad Plus, Jim Hall,** the **Heath Brothers,** and **Bill Charlap.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640): The Drawings"** discovers the Flemish progenitor of the Baroque in modes other than the bombastic rhetoric of his only too well known paintings. Trenchant early copies of Michelangelos and ancient statuary testify to Rubens's analytical intelligence, and late, scrumptiously flattering portraits bespeak his diplomatic subtlety. Most exciting is a truth-telling realism, apparent in great pictures of animals—ominously sulking lions, a perfectly stupid ox—and exotic persons, such as a Jesuit missionary in Chinese dress. But the show's parts don't cohere. The Walt Disney of his day, an industrialist of standardized pleasures, Rubens plainly was indifferent to anything about his art except its worldly success. Through April 3. ♦ **"From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca: Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master."** Through May 1. ♦ The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden, usually closed in the winter months, will be open Feb. 12-27, weather permitting, for aerial viewing of "The Gates," Christo and Jean-Claude's project in Central Park. ♦ Duccio's "Madonna and Child," circa 1300, a triumphant recent acquisition for the Met. Through March 13. ♦ **"Wild: Fashion Untamed."** Clothes and accessories derived from and inspired by animals. Through March 13. ♦ **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm."** Through June 5. ♦ **"Heritage of Power: Ancient Sculpture from West Mexico; The Andrall E. Pearson Family Collection."** Through April 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—The museum has reopened in its renovated and enlarged home and is presenting a series of exhibits related to its metamorphosis. ♦ **"Projects 82: Mark Dion—Rescue Archaeology."** Dion excavated traces of former Rockefeller town houses and the old Dorset Hotel from beneath the sculpture garden for this site-specific project. Through March 14. ♦ **"Michael Wesely: Open Shutter at the Museum of Modern Art."** The German photographer turned his long exposure method (he has left the shutter open for as long as three years) on MOMA while it was under construction. Through mid-2005. ♦ **"Contemporary Voices: Works from the UBS Art Collection."** Through April 25. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire"** lines the Guggenheim's spiral with more than four hundred artifacts, from carvings depicting harvest work to implements for human sacrifice. Through Feb. 13. ♦ Among the artists represented in **"Recent Acquisitions: Contemporary Sculpture"** are Los Carpinteros, Robert Gober, and Tom Friedman. Through Feb. 27. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Tim Hawkinson."** Opens Feb. 11 (see This Week). ♦ **"Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper"** proves that the more works by Twombly that you see at once, the better each one gets. Fugitive spontaneities of line and texture can seem incidental, or even accidental, in isolation; in quantity, their teeming persistence gently overwhelms. Twombly's style is all nuance, inflecting desultory scribbles and scrawls. His tender ardor for history-saturated Mediterranean and Caribbean eros builds a charge of sea-breezy, elegiac joys. If he forces things at times—with tricky

numbers and glypyhs in the nineteen-sixties or, lately, with lurid color—it is to remind us of his ambition. This lyric poet aspires to the laurels of an epic bard. Through May 8. ♦ **"Ellen Gallagher: DeLuxe."** A series of embellished images based on advertisements from mid-century African-American magazines. Through May 15. ♦ **"James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence."** Drawings, installations, and sculpture. Through March 6. ♦ **"Political Nature,"** a modest gathering of prints and drawings by Walton Ford, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Frank Moore, and Stephanie Syjuco. Through March 27. ♦ **"Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium."** A large-scale video installation made in 2001. Through March 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940"** is succinct and scholarly, a crash course in names both big—Böcklin, Kubin, Klinger, Nolde, Grosz, Feininger, Höch, Heartfield—and little (the performer and filmmaker Karl Valentin is a real find) who infused Germanic avant-gardism with sometimes hilarious, always obstreperous ill temper. Through Feb. 14. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

THE SCULPTURE CENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"Petah Coyne: Above and Beneath the Skin"** is a suitably creepy title for this retrospective of sculptures that simultaneously recall natural forms and repel touch. Giant, organically shaped specimens made from raw materials such as hair, twigs, tar, and sand hang from the ceiling. One, cobbled out of sticks and straw, looks like a huge wasps' nest; another resembles a canopy of Spanish moss. Recent works are more earthbound, gothic, and knowingly kitsch, with masses of plastic birds and flowers, ribbons, and Virgin Mary figurines covered with dripped wax. Some of the sculptures have eerie black coatings, a reference to the black rain of Hiroshima, while others conjure the toxic debris of 9/11. Through April 10. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ANTHONY CARO
Caro's far-ranging, half-century-long career (he was an assistant to Henry Moore in the early nineteen-fifties) has taken him from abstract to figural sculpture and back again. Here the emphasis is on surface: all the steel, iron, or aluminum sculptures have been painted. Those from the sixties, like the abstract "Cadence," or "Aroma," a perforated fence reminiscent of Lichtenstein's Benday dots, have sleek lines. "Petticoats" (1971/1976) is made of found steel sheets painted brown, composed to look as if they were flapping. Recent works like the galvanized "Table Piece Humbolt" or the larger "Solo" are cruder and more bulbous, with the air of medieval machines. Through Feb. 26. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave. 212-744-7400.)

CHRISTO AND JEAN-CLAUDE
"The Gates," the couple's much anticipated Central Park project, will trace twenty-three miles of pathways with rippling saffron-colored nylon. Throughout Central Park, Feb. 12-27.

RICHARD SERRA
Muscular abstract etchings that reproduce the severe, monumental ethos of the artist's sculptures. The vertical black fields, titled "Extensions," "Transversal," or "Trajectory," differ only in their outlines, which bend and sway with subtle emphasis. Copper plates soaked in acid for days produced the prints' deeply pitted surfaces. Each one was made with more than a pound of ink, resulting in deep black fields with textures like those of fossils or stucco. These are bold statements that rely on economy of means. Through Feb. 12. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 212-223-2227.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

LAYLAH ALI
Pastel skies serve as backdrops for a rogues' gallery of unnamed warriors in Ali's gouaches, which conjure African tribal images, cartoons, comics, and American primitive portraits. Much of Ali's work reads as a critique of racism, with stereotypical characters turned to subversive purposes. Here those critiques are muted. Instead she enlarges the faces of her figures and exhibits them divorced from her customary, disjointed narratives—in repose, perhaps, or waiting for their next assignment. Through Feb. 19. (303, at 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

JOSEPH BEUYS AND BARRY LE VA
Eleven chalk-on-blackboard drawings executed by Beuys for Documenta 7 in 1982 (and then augmented for a 1984 performance) are replete with visionary scribblings—"das Geld ist *nicht* Kapital!"—and little images, including a portrait of the Master himself in his trademark fedora. Adjacent are Le Va's collaged "paintings" from 1986 and 1988, in black, red, purple, and silvery gray, along with a large geometric floor installation of aluminum spheres, hydrostone cubes, and mahogany two-by-fours. Through Feb. 12. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

CECILY BROWN
Seven big, juicy new oils advance Brown's improbable rejuvenation of de Kooningesque, semi-abstract pastorale. Rumpled accumulations of splotches, smears, and wristy strokes hint at lush landscapes and/or orgiastic goings on. Push-pull juxtapositions of cool and warm colors (blue-greens with red-violets, for example) keep the crowded surfaces porous and jostling. Most like de Kooning is Brown's way of evoking bits of figurative contour with untethered marks, as if her pictures were sweet explosions of bodies in bliss. Almost as tactile as it is visual, the experience of looking at them suggests a more than friendly massage. Through Feb. 26. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

PETAH COYNE
A companion exhibition to the Sculpture Center show in Queens, including three new large-scale works. Through March 16. (Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

MARC QUINN
These six large bronzes, cast from limbless, headless, eviscerated animal carcasses, are a disturbing (and less interesting) step sideways from Quinn's recent sculptures of amputees. The truncated bodies are set up in anthropomorphic poses, seated or reclining—there's even a mother-and-child arrangement done with a rabbit and lamb—but they're already so far along the path to meat that they don't seem to have any animal left in them, much less a hint of humanity. One can almost smell the decay around these unbeautiful remnants of bulls, deer, and cows. Through Feb. 26. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

FAITH RINGGOLD
Jazz singers in polka-dot dresses sway to the sound of their backup bands in a series of silk-screen drawings and electric-colored quilts with acrylic-on-canvas centers. The drawings serve as studies, but some also include supplementary text, like the lyrics wrapped around the frame of "Somebody Stole My Broken Heart." Characteristically folksy and naïve, Ringgold's drawing style is easily adaptable to other formats, like the numerous children's books she's illustrated. The latest, on view, includes images of brown-skinned angels and nativity scenes paired with Christmas-carol lyrics. Through Feb. 12. (ACA, 529 W. 20th St. 212-206-8080.)

T. J. WILCOX
The whirring of projectors takes you back to grade school, but Wilcox's short films, created from both new and found footage, are more poignant than most educational fare. There's the story of Ortino, Princess Tatiana's French bulldog, who was assassinated along with the Romanov clan; an eighty-second world tour described in postcard images; and a heartbreaking ode to the artist's stepmother, who died at forty-two and had her ashes scattered in three locations. The show's title, "Garlands," can mean a collection of art works or literary pieces, but the more common definition works here as well; the show is as lovely and

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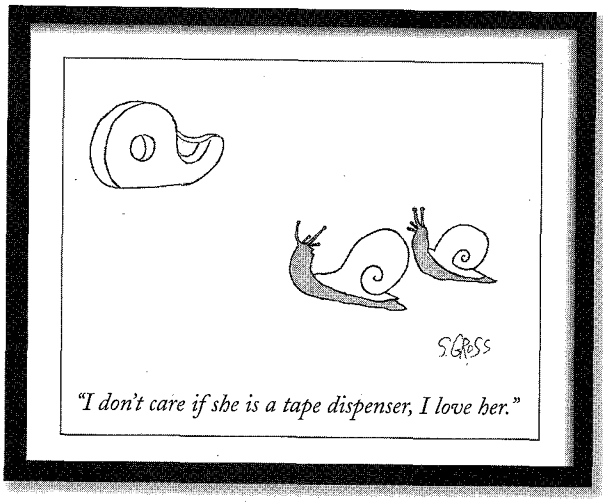
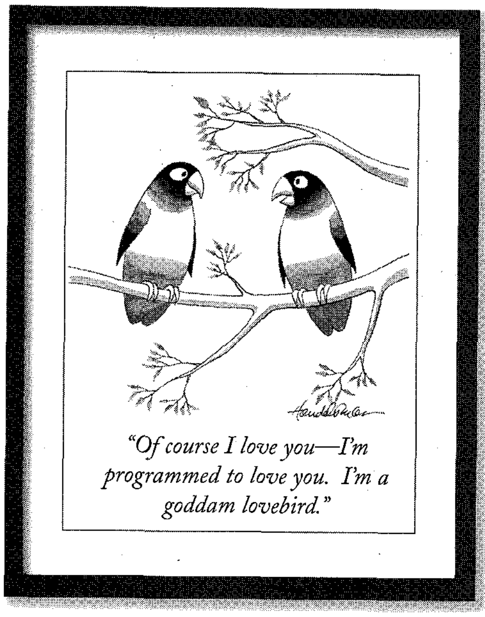


"I don't care if she is a tape dispenser, I love her."

SAM GROSS 1998

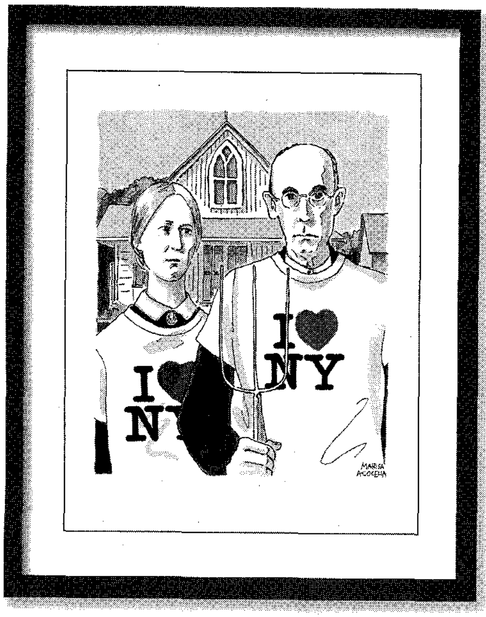

Handelsman

"Of course I love you—I'm programmed to love you. I'm a goddam lovebird."

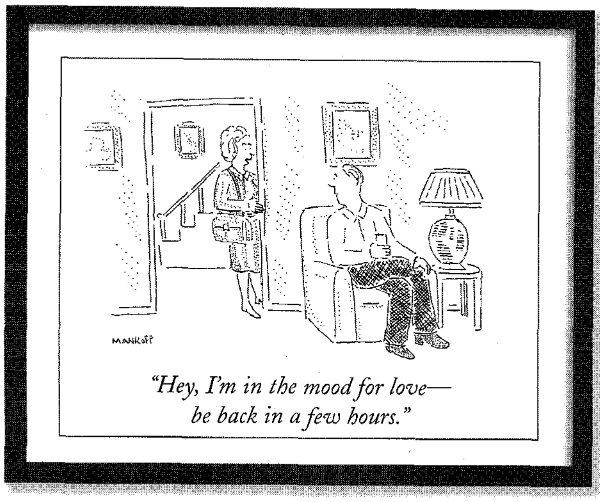
J.B. HANDELSMAN 1993

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LOVE

New Yorker cartoon prints from The Cartoon Bank

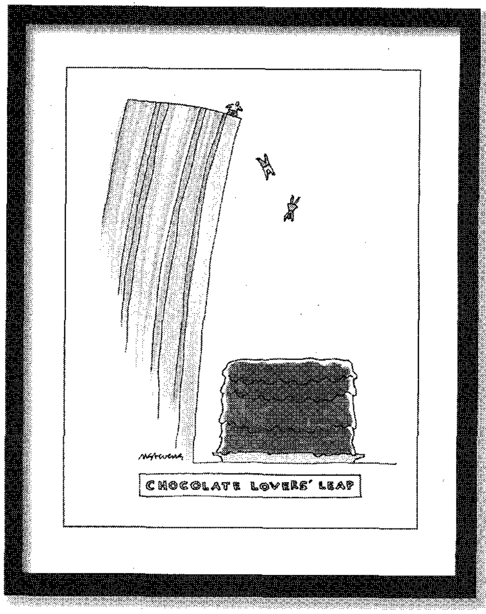

I ♥ NY
I ♥ NY
MARISA ACOCELLA

MARISA ACOCELLA 2001



"Hey, I'm in the mood for love—be back in a few hours."

ROBERT MANKOFF 2001


M.STEVENS
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MICK STEVENS 1988

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sad as a flower wreath at a funeral. Through Feb. 26. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

JUSTIN FAUNCE
Garish, luscious, and seductively dense, Faunce's paintings are so chockablock with media snippets that it takes a moment to register how each work is structured like a Rorschach blot—even the mirror symmetries seem imbalanced. From I.B.M. to CNN to W.M.D., from the Capitol dome to the Wal-Mart sign, every logo gloms onto every other: blood and oil seep into rainbow flags, the Emerald City becomes a McMansion, and Michael Jackson's face is restyled to look like the iconic Che Guevara portrait. It's funny and horrible, and all in toy-box color. Through March 5. (Koenig, 249 Centre St. 212-334-9255.)

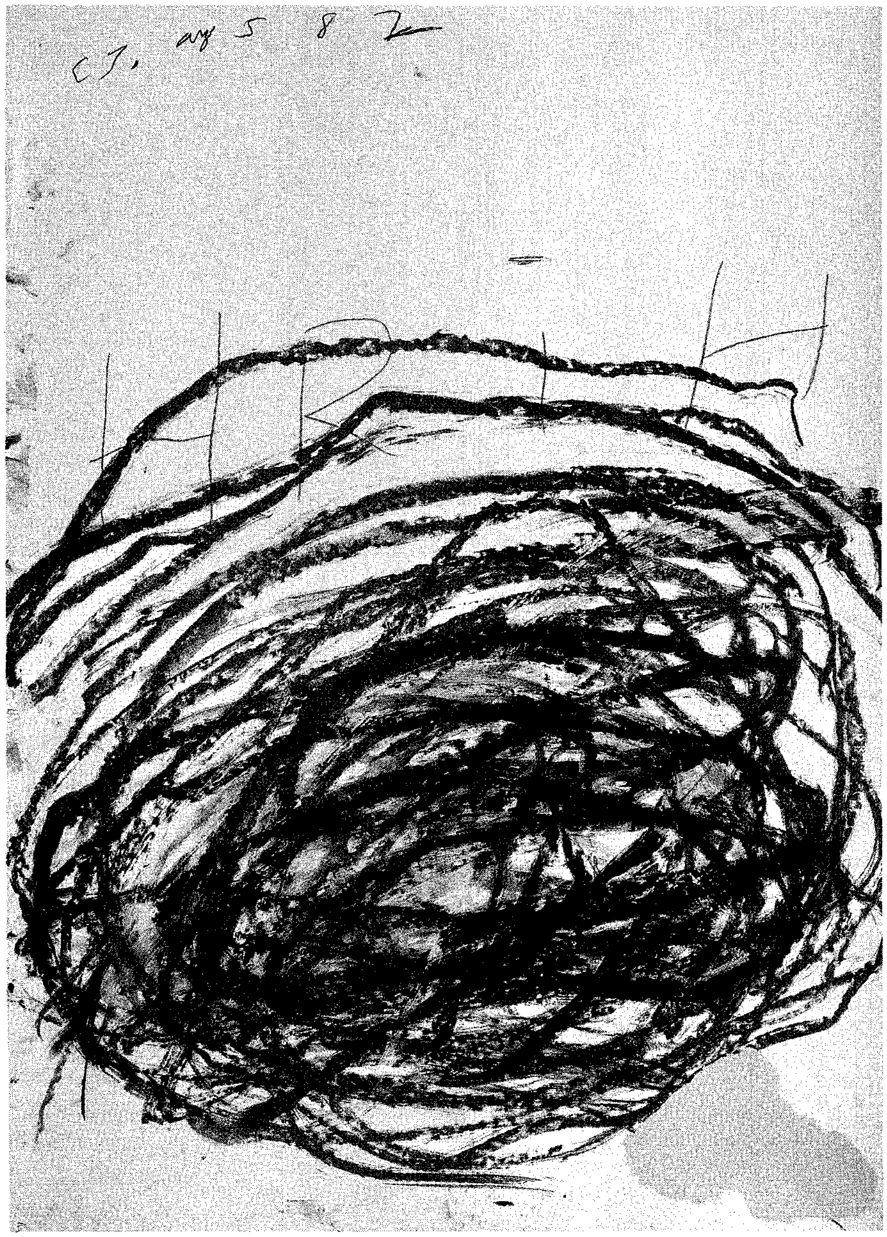
GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

KYSA JOHNSON
Some of Johnson's paintings look like equations scribbled on chalkboards; others look like wallpaper or fabric samples. In fact, her dense designs are derived from subatomic decay patterns and the microscopic structures of diseases like whooping cough and tuberculosis. Here and there a recognizable figure—a palm frond, the outline of the Madonna—emerges incongruously from the web. The paintings are easy on the eye, with attractive palettes (Crayola primaries, black-and-white, sepia with faded green), but the fragile mark-making doesn't fully bear the weight of Johnson's source material. Through Feb. 14. (Roebling Hall, 390 Wythe Ave. 718-599-5352.)

"CRACKER: RETHINKING THE AMERICAN SOUTH"
Twelve artists and two small Williamsburg galleries participate in a survey of new art from Southern states. The artists include Jen DeNike, Katherine Daniels, Brantner DeAtley, and Chris Verene. Through Feb. 13. (NURTUREart, 475 Keap St. 718-782-7755; and Naked Duck, 66 Jackson St. 718-609-4096.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

STEPHEN HUGHES
A selection of exquisite color landscapes, most of them in the margins of European towns and cities or by the sea, identified only by the sketchiest of place names. If Andreas Gursky is the glittering existentialist of the European aesthetic, then Hughes is the demure poet, concerning himself less with the ghastly spectacle of modern life than with moments of strange beauty. In "Far Rockaway, USA," the bleakness of an urban coastal landscape in winter is perfectly rendered—inscrutable high-rises in the background, a blank tract house in the foreground. There are no signs of life except for a few gulls walking the shoreline—and, in the water, a miraculous swan. Through March 5. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)



"Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper," at the Whitney through May 8.

"HRIH" (1982) © CY TWOMBLY AND PRIVATE COLLECTION

PETER HUJAR
Downtown New York at night in the seventies and early eighties, before SoHo and the meatpacking district were turned into shopping malls, was anarchic, filthy, and fun. In these glistening photographs of unpopulated streets and lighted downtown office buildings; of a smashed car and a defunct diner; of angelic, muscled pretty boys and flocks of giddy queens on Halloween, Hujar captures the high jinks, the innocence, and also the wreckage of this vivid period, when people came to the city to reinvent themselves. The images recall Abbott, Arbus, and Evans but have their own distinct period feel. In "Blanket 1985," a piece of old carpet, folded inside out, is heaped on the sidewalk, alongside a string of battered Guston-like trash cans, suggesting the era's cold, bitter comfort; two years later, Hujar, along with so many of his subjects, was dead, of AIDS. Through March 5. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

TRISH MORRISSEY
A set of color prints that depict the thirty-seven-year-old Irish photographer and her sister—posed as themselves as children, their parents, and various aunts and friends. Morrissey uses dated clothes like tight running shorts and multicolored nylon coats to create her reimagined family moments, along with formal gimmickry—in "August 8, 1982," a pose at the seaside is marred by two blurry fingers over the lens. Through Feb. 26. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

"MAPPING SITTING: ON PORTRAITURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY"
The Lebanese co-curators of this group show, Akram Zaatari and Walid Raad, provide a compact yet insightful primer of photographic practices in the Middle East—and, by extension, of daily life in the region—during the twentieth century. Culled from the archives of the Beirut-based Arab Image Foundation, the images range from the mundane (identification photos, military group portraits) to the provocative (a playfully erotic series of prints from 1949 and 1950 featuring men stretched out like odalisques on a beach rock). Projections of superimposed "photo surprise" shots revisit the genteel urbanism of Arab cities in the forties and fifties through images of families, children, and friends, and groups of stylish young women strolling arm in arm through a square in Lebanon. In contradistinction to the prevalent images of the Middle East in today's media, chadors and kaffiyehs appear rarely in this collection. Through April 2. (Grey, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780.)

Short List

RICHARD AVEDON
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.
Through Feb. 18.

RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD
International Center of Photography, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 212-857-0000. Through Feb. 27.

STUART O'SULLIVAN
Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.
Through Feb. 26.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Feb. 15-16 at 10 A.M. and 2 and Feb. 17 at 10 A.M.: Eight years ago, when Sotheby's auctioned off the estate of Jacqueline Onassis, hundreds of people scrambled for any memento of the Kennedy aura. This smaller sale also trades on that ineffable quality, with more than six hundred lots from the Kennedy residences in Hyannis Port, Martha's Vineyard, New Jer-

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90	Rain 1995 Harvest Vodka
89	Ketel One Vodka
88	Wyborowa Vodka
87	Kremlyovskaya Vodka
86	Finlandia Vodka of Finland
86	Alps French Vodka
85	Skyy Vodka
82	Original Polish Vodka
82	Glenmore Special
82	Fleischmann's Royal Vodka
81	Mr. Boston Vodka
80	Pole Star Vodka
80	Luksusowa Potato Vodka
80	Absolut Vodka
78	Cardinal Vodka
78	Barton Vodka
78	Barclay's Vodka
78	Amazon Vodka
76	Skol Vodka
74	Smirnoff Vodka
74	Crystal Palace Vodka
74	Belvedere
72	Schenley
69	Mr. Boston's Riva Vodka

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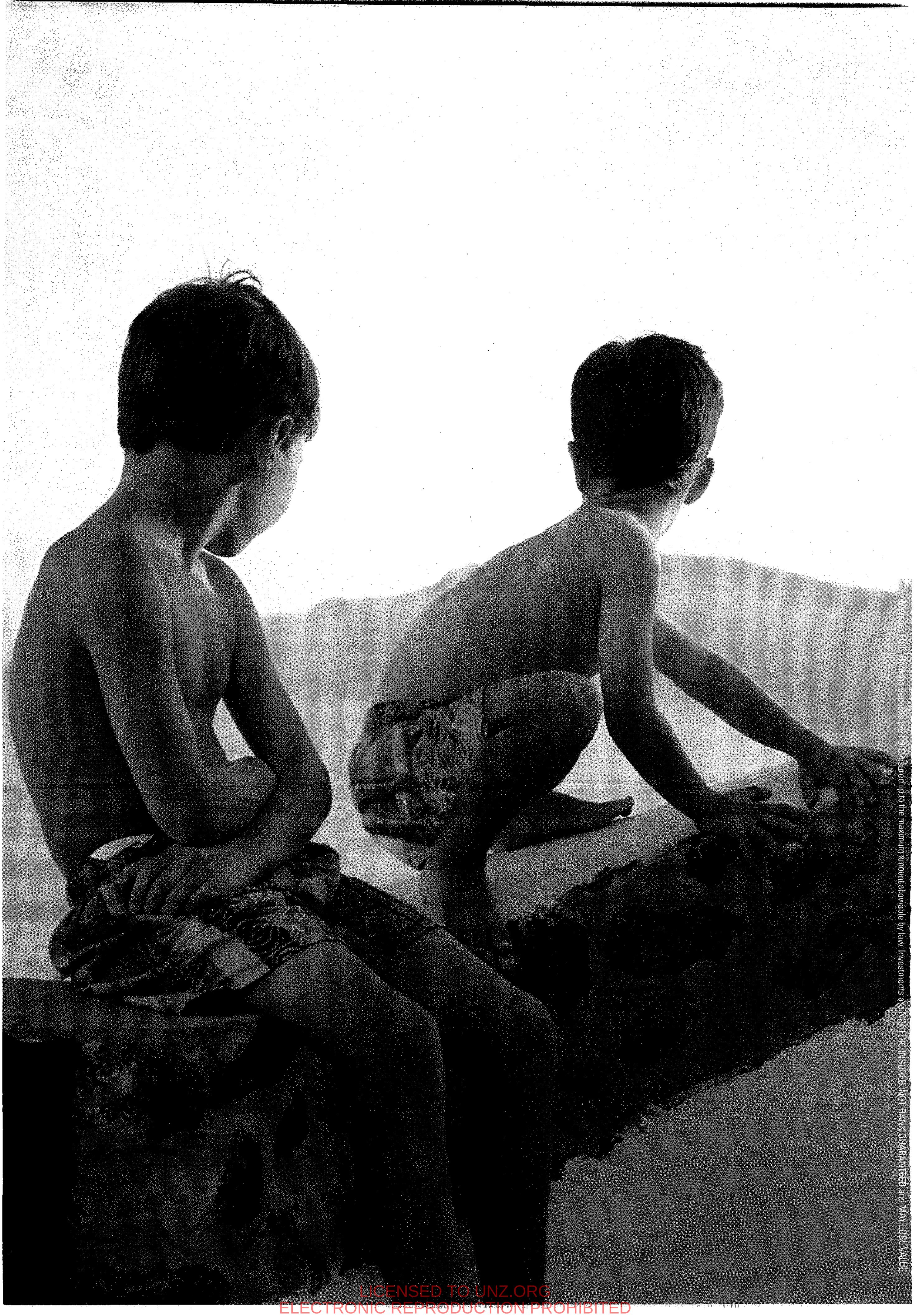

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sey, New York, and Virginia. Most are household items (a doll-house barn, complete with plastic horse; a breakfast set for two; vases and pitchers of Sandwich glass) and pieces of American furniture and folk art. There are a few valuable pieces (most notably a Khmer sandstone statue from Jackie's Manhattan apartment), but one suspects that they won't be the main draw. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

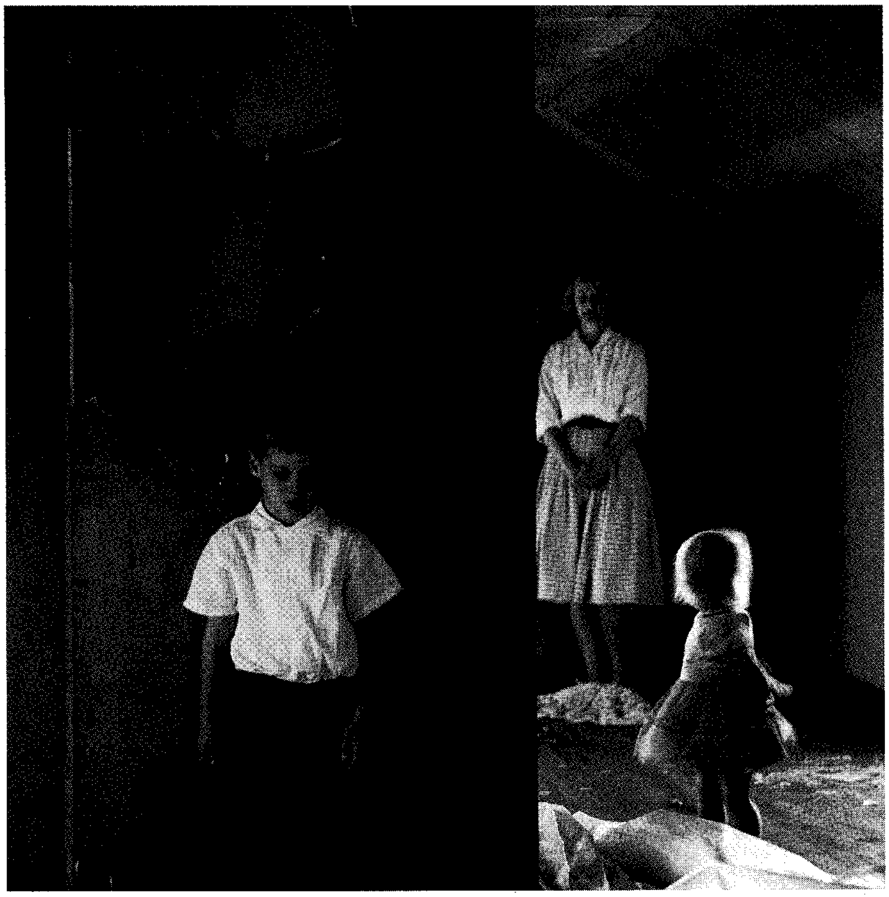
Feb. 15 at 10 A.M. and 2: This sale of photographs confirms once and for all that a true craftsman requires little more than geometry or a nude. The flowers in Imogen Cunningham's "Two Callas" unfurl in sublime concentric languor; Ansel Adams's "The Teton Range and the Snake River" famously revels in the triangular peaks of Grand Teton National Park. The two come together in Cunningham's "Triangles," a sensuously geometric configuration of the female body. ♦ Feb. 17 at 10 A.M. and 2: An unmounted square-cut fancy brown diamond, expected to bring up to half a million dollars, highlights a sale of jewelry. ♦ Feb. 22 at 10 A.M.: This sale of Impressionist and modern art features several intriguing matchups in urban landscape and the human form. Hughes-Claude Pissarro's "La Place à Masséna, à Nice" is a stately portrait of metropolitan order, while in Jean Dufy's "Marrakech" the city sways along with its colorful, vibrant people; Jeanne Guérard-Gonzalès's "Portrait de Eva Gonzalès (à Dieppe)" is a work of classic solemnity, whereas Béla Kádár, in two versions of "Mother and Child," fragments and flattens his protagonists into rhythmical Cubist patterns. Pablo Picasso weighs in with "Femme Debout," an homage to Giacometti that is, nonetheless, unmistakably and voluptuously his own. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE

Feb. 9 at 10 A.M.: "Belle Époque," an occasional auction of nineteenth- and twentieth-century furniture and decorative art works. ♦ Feb. 15 at 1: The two featured lots in this year's "Dogs in Art" auction, timed to coincide with the Westminster Kennel Club's annual dog show, traverse the gap between high and low. On the one hand, there's Percival Rosseau's elegant 1919 painting of two English setters that belonged to the Rockefellers; on the other, a pair of dogs-playing-poker paintings by the apparent inventor of the genre, Cassius Coolidge. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN

Feb. 10 at 2: An auction of printed and manuscript Americana. ♦ Feb. 14 at 2:30: A Valentine's Day auction of a hundred photographs features a large cibachrome print of Vik Muniz's "Chocolate Kiss" (a photograph of the artist's brashly rendered chocolate-syrup sketch of Rodin's "The Kiss"), expected to bring up to twenty-five thousand dollars. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



An untitled photograph from 1961 by Ralph Eugene Meatyard, at I.C.P.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Feb. 9 at 7:30, Feb. 12 and Feb. 15 at 8, and Feb. 19 at 1:30: **"La Bohème"** may be an opera about a bunch of crazy, mixed-up kids, but its latest outing at the Met features an experienced cast that includes Ruth Ann Swenson, Patricia Racette, Roberto Aronica, and Dwayne Croft; Daniel Oren conducts. ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Cynthia Lawrence, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, Marco Berti, and Charles Taylor; Emmanuel Villaume. ♦ Feb. 16 at 8: With Kallen Esperian, Maria Zifchak, and Vassily Gerello replacing Lawrence, Herrera, and Taylor. ♦ Feb. 11 at 8 and Feb. 17 and Feb. 22 at 7:30: Franco Zeffirelli's deluxe 1987 production of **"Turandot,"** with Andrea Gruber (in the title role), Johan Botha, and Krassimira Stoyanova; Bertrand de Billy. ♦ Feb. 12 at 1:30 and Feb. 18 at 8: Jonathan Miller's production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** staged this season by Robin Guarino, features Janice Watson (in the role of the Countess), Andrea Rost, Jossie Pérez, Mariusz Kwiecien, and John Relyea (as Figaro); James Levine. (These are the final performances.) ♦ Feb. 14 and Feb. 19 at 8: Elijah Moshinsky's monumental production of Verdi's **"Nabucco,"** one of the triumphs of the 2000-2001 season, returns with its leading lady, Maria Guleghina (in the vocally bruising role of Abigaille), and with the Metropolitan Opera Chorus, which in the freedom hymn "Va, pensiero" becomes a collective star unto itself. Also with the formidable Wendy White, Nikolai Putilin, and Paata Burchuladze; Levine. ♦ Feb. 21 at 8: Saint-Saëns's **"Samson et Dalila,"** with José Cura, Denyce Graves, and Jean-Philippe Lafont; de Billy. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

WILLIAM BOLCOM'S "CASINO PARADISE"

These days, Bolcom, the rangy Michigan composer and piano virtuoso, is being fêted for his huge and noble William Blake oratorio, "Songs of Innocence and of Experience," but this 1990 cabaret opera about a corrupt casino developer and his wayward children shows off his down-and-dirty side. The bracing sleaze of Arnold Weinstein's libretto not only makes room for gangsters, hookers, a drag queen, and a gold-digging nurse—sung by the incomparable Joan Morris, Bolcom's muse of three decades—but gives the composer's irrepressible lyrical gift and eclectic style room to run. It comes to the Frederick P. Rose Hall's Allen Room for one night only, directed by Lisa Peterson. (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Feb. 9 at 8:30.)

GOTHAM CHAMBER OPERA: "ARIANNA IN CRETA"

The Lower East Side may lack the glamour of Lincoln Center, but this enterprising, high-class company, which presents its once-a-year productions in the jewel-box Harry de Jur Playhouse, has long served New York's operatic connoisseurs. Its latest offering is the American première of Handel's little-known work from 1733, the first in a projected series of Gotham operas dealing with the Ariadne myth. Neal Goren conducts an early-music band and a cast that includes such City Opera stalwarts as Caroline Worra and Kevin Burdette. (466 Grand St. 212-279-4200. Feb. 10 at 7 and Feb. 12, Feb. 15, and Feb. 18 at 7:30.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "LE ROI MALGRÉ LUI"

"The King in Spite of Himself," the most exquisite of Emmanuel Chabrier's opéra comiques, is given a well-deserved concert revival by the intrepid Leon Botstein, his orchestra, and the Concert Chorale of New York, with the soprano Patricia Petibon and the baritone Andrew Schroeder in the leading roles. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. Feb. 13 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Since the well-travelled Italian maestro Riccardo Chailly is about to become the latest conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig—Kurt Masur's old gig—his appearances with the Philharmonic this month will be eagerly watched. The first is a run of Mahler's Seventh Symphony, the most enticing and elusive of the composer's ten. (Feb. 10 and Feb. 15 at 7:30, Feb. 11 at 2, and Feb. 12 at 8.) ♦ Chailly concludes his residency with an Eastern European program of Pärt (the "Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten"), Mussorgsky ("Songs and Dances of Death," featuring the up-and-coming mezzo-soprano Marina Domashenko), and Stravinsky ("The Firebird," complete). (Feb. 17 at 7:30 and Feb. 18-19 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S

The violinist Kyoko Takezawa is the guest for a concert of music by Vaughan Williams ("The Lark Ascending"), Beethoven (the Fifth Symphony and the Romance No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra), and the Scottish composer James MacMillan (the New York première of his Symphony No. 2); Donald Runnicles, a fellow-Scot and the group's principal conductor, leads the program. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 10 at 8.)

JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA

Marin Alsop, one of the school's more distinguished alumnae, leads the Juilliard Orchestra in John Corigliano's "Tournaments," Hindemith's "Der Schwanendreher" (with the violist Nadia Sirota), and

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Brahms's Symphony No. 2 in D Major. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 14 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION
Dennis Keene conducts his professional chorus, with orchestra, in a gala program of two Mozart Masses: the Mass in C Minor, K. 427, and the "Coronation" Mass, K. 317. The soloists include the sopranos Adina Aaron and Marguerite Krull. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-358-1469. Feb. 17 at 8.)

RECITALS

ZANKEL HALL RECITALS
Feb. 9 at 7:30: Piotr Anderszewski, the commanding young Polish pianist, performs music by Bach, Szymanowski, and Chopin (the Sonata in B Minor). ♦ Feb. 13 at 5: Dawn Upshaw sings Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" on the Met Chamber Ensemble's program of modernist works (which also includes music by Carter and Dallapiccola); James Levine is the music director. ♦ Feb. 15 at 7:30: Arrangements of music by Bach (including Contrapunctus 1 from "The Art of Fugue") are the foundation of a concert by the Emerson String Quartet that also includes works by Beethoven and Mendelssohn (the Quartets Nos. 1 and 2). (212-247-7800.)

JOSHUA BELL
The energetic American violinist performs the kind of program that evokes the heyday of Heifetz and Szigeti—sonatas for violin and piano by Brahms (the limpid Sonata No. 1, in G Major), Saint-Saëns, and Janáček, along with bonbons by Bartók and Wieniawski. Jeremy Denk accompanies him. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Feb. 9 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Feb. 10 at 6:45: Recent works by Moto Osada, Clancy Newman (playing his own music, on unaccompanied cello), and Kenji Bunch are featured in the Society's latest "Double Exposure" concert, a twice-played concert that includes a reception with the artists in between. (Rose Studio, Rose Building.) ♦ Feb. 11 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 5: The society's leading musicians (including the violist Paul Neubauer and the pianist André-Michel Schub) offer an all-French program that includes Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Piano and Fauré's Piano Quartet No. 1 in C Minor. (Alice Tully Hall.) (212-875-5788.)

"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES: MICHAEL HARRISON'S "REVELATION"
Harrison, an old-guard pioneer of experimental piano writing, won't let anyone play his ninety-minute just-intonation epic without training him himself. Joshua Pierce, after years of study, will offer the première performance of the complete score at Merkin Concert Hall. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Feb. 10 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE
Feb. 12 at 8: "The Ambassadors," a program performed by the Orlando Concert that imagines the life of a European ambassador of the Renaissance who samples the extraordinary vocal music of Burgundy, Italy, England, and Spain. ♦ Feb. 17 at 8: The Music from Copland House ensemble plays its namesake's "Sextet" (and Prokofiev's "Overture on Hebrew Themes") as a prelude to new and recent works by John Musto and Sebastian Currier. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. For a complete schedule, see www.millertheatre.org.)

JOSÉ VAN DAM
For many, this Belgian baritone, still a force in his mid-sixties, remains the most supple and stylish singer of songs the world can offer. Maciej Pikulski accompanies him in two recitals. Feb. 13 at 2: A concert of French *mélodies* by Fauré, Debussy, and Massenet. ♦ Feb. 16 at 8: A selection of lieder by Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "FATS AND FIELDS"
Steven Blier is the pianist, arranger, and compère for this concert, which surveys the work of the pianist-singer-songwriter Fats Waller and the lyricist Dorothy Fields. The singers are Jennifer Aylmer, Judy Kaye,

Words on Music

Borders' music expert Jessica Sendra says:
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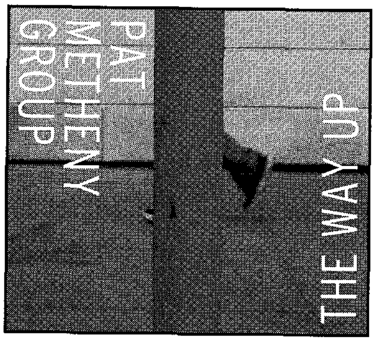

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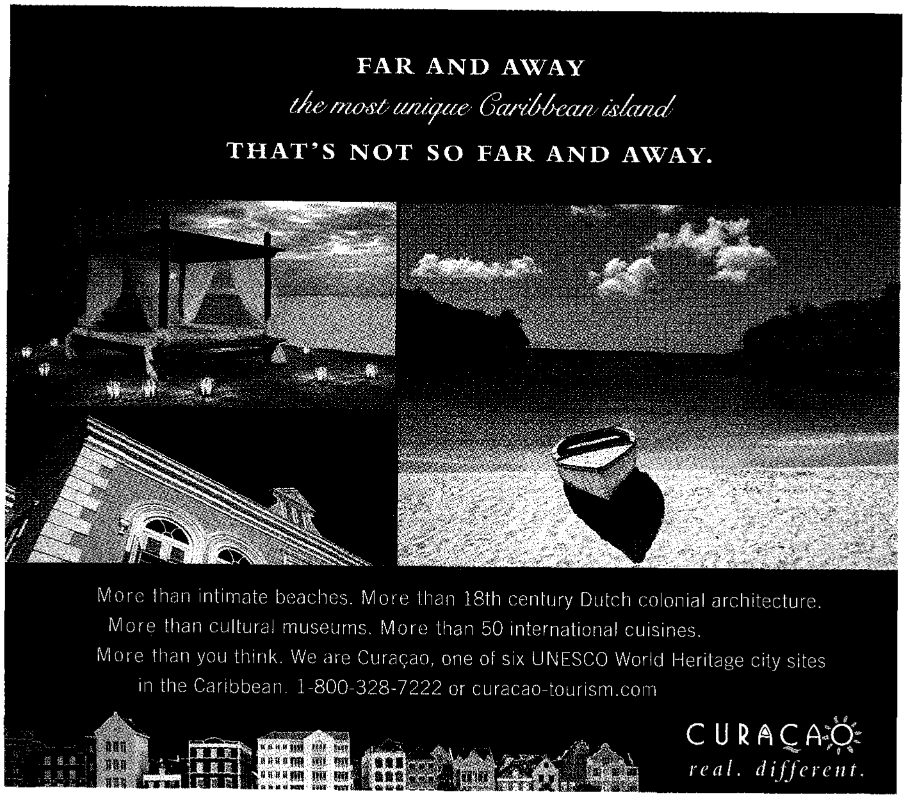

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Jason Graae, and James Martin. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Feb. 16 at 8.)

92ND STREET Y: OLLI MUSTONEN
The imaginative (and physically expressive) young pianist offers his only New York recital of the season, an evening of music by Sibelius, Scarlatti, and Rachmaninoff (the seldom heard Sonata No. 1 in D Minor). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 16 at 8. For a complete schedule of concerts, see www.92ndsty.org.)

LARK QUARTET
The vibrant American ensemble continues its survey of the Beethoven String Quartets, including the Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 130, the "Grosse Fuge," and the "Pencarrow" Quartet, a recently discovered miniature. (Hunter College, Park Ave. at 69th St. 212-772-4448. Feb. 17 at 7.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Feb. 18 at 7: The museum's young Artists in Concert (including the violinist Jennifer Frautschi, the violinist and violist Colin Jacobsen, and the pianist Andrew Armstrong) perform music by Pärt, Schnittke (the Piano Quintet), Schubert, and Mendelssohn (the String Quintet in A Major, Op. 18). ♦ Feb. 19 at 8: André Watts offers a solo recital of piano works by Haydn, Mozart, Debussy ("Estampes"), Ligeti (excerpts from "Musica Ricercata"), and Liszt (several pieces, including "Nuages Gris"). (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949.)

BARGEMUSIC
Isidore Cohen, the violinist of the Beaux Arts Trio for three decades, comes out of retirement to lead a string quartet (with the violinist Aaron Boyd, the violist Maurycy Banaszek, and the cellist Priscilla E. Lee) in Haydn's "Seven Last Words of Christ." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Feb. 19 at 7:30 and Feb. 20 at 4. For a complete schedule of concerts, see www.bargemusic.org.)

RICHARD GOODE
The veteran pianist brings his poetic style to music by Bach, Schoenberg, Debussy (Book I of the "Préludes"), and Beethoven (the Sonata in E Major, Op. 109). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 20 at 8.)

RENÉE FLEMING
Hartmut Höll accompanies the diva in songs and arias by Berg, Schumann, Handel, and Purcell. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 21 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Feb. 14 at 8: The musicians Jason Molina, Mark Mulcahy, and Megan Reilly join the poets Anselm Berrigan, Peter Gizzi, and Rachel Zucker and other contributors to the book and CD "Isn't It Romantic: 100 Love Poems by Younger American Poets" for a Valentine's Day reading. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 212-219-3055.) ♦ Feb. 16 at 6:30: The actors Dana Ivey, Anne Jackson, and Fritz Weaver read humorous short stories by V. S. Pritchett, Ring Lardner, and R. T. Smith. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ Feb. 17 at 7:30: Linh Dinh, Mark McMorris, Tracie Morris, D. A. Powell, Joe Wenderoth, and Elizabeth Willis read from their poetry. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Tickets at the door.)

TALKS
Feb. 14 at 7: Ernest C. Withers, the photographer who documented the civil-rights movement, captured the Memphis music scene, and chronicled baseball players in the Negro League, talks about his work. (Parsons School of Design, 66 Fifth Ave., between 12th and 13th Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Feb. 16 at 7: Lisa Couturier, the author of "The Hopes of Snakes & Other Tales from the Urban Landscape," discusses the city's wildlife with Chris Nadareski, a peregrine expert with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. (Melville Gallery, South Street Seaport Museum, 213 Water St. For more information, call 212-748-8735.) ♦ Feb. 22 at 7: E. L. Doctorow, Norman Rush, and James Wood mark the four-hundredth anniversary of "Don Quixote." (LeFrak Concert Hall, Queens College, Flushing. For more information, call 718-997-4646 or visit www.qc.edu/readings.)

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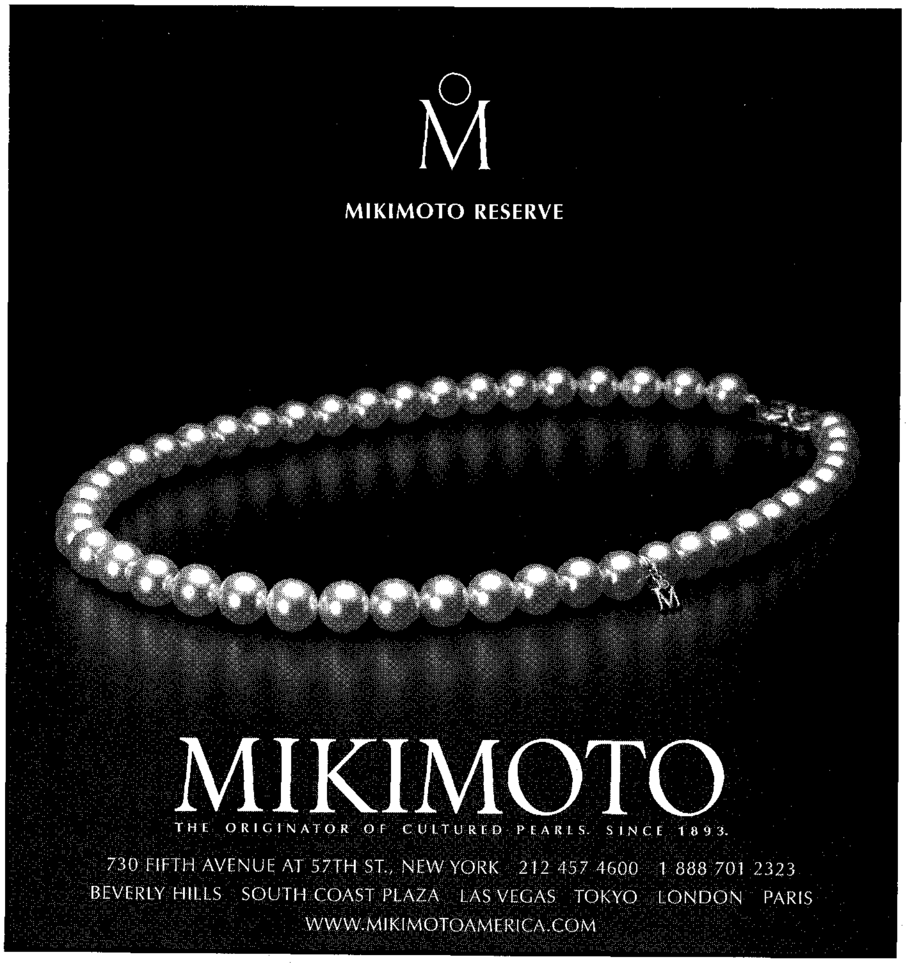
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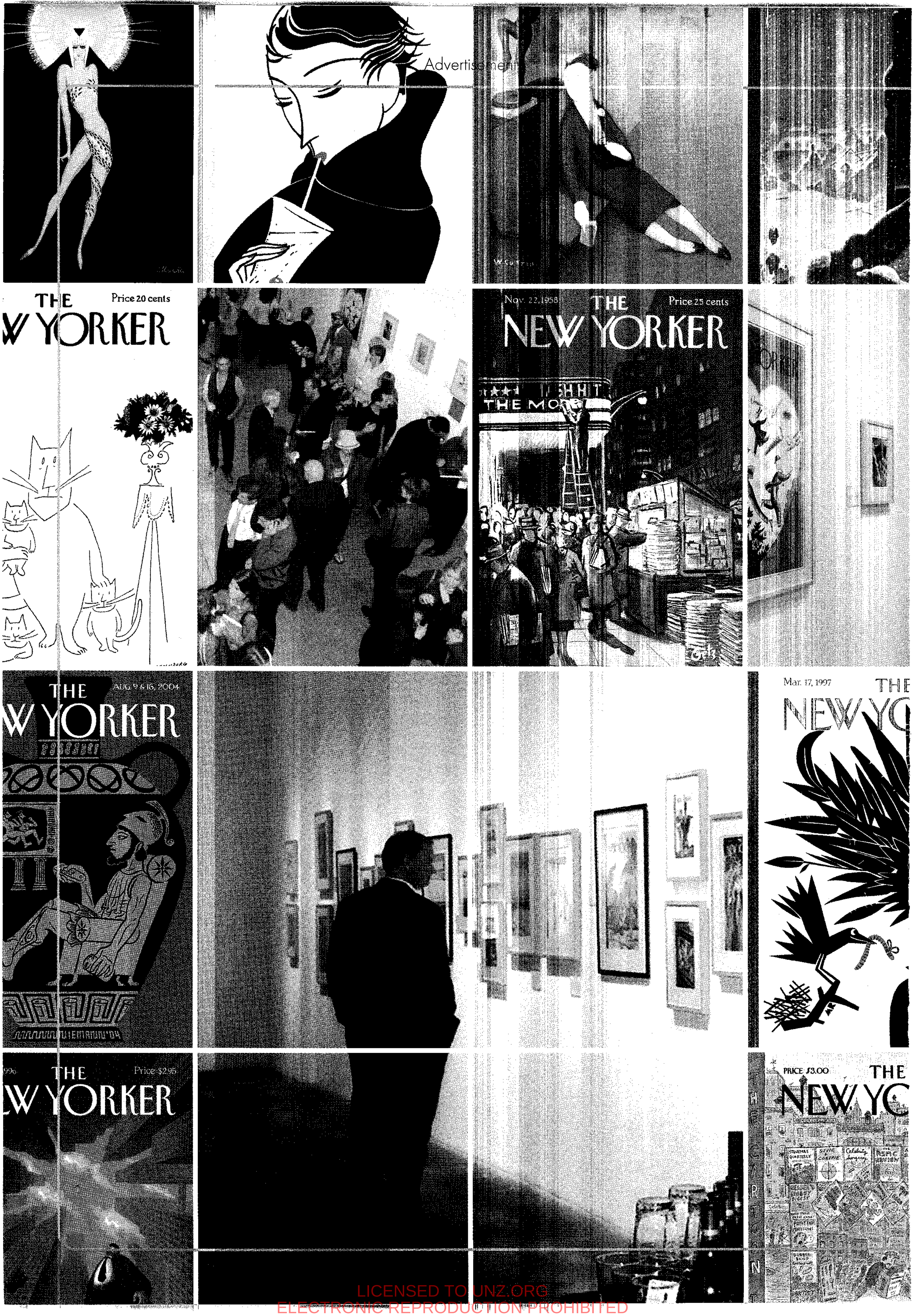
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MOVIES OPENING

BAD GUY
A young woman attempts to exact revenge on the older man who assaulted her, in a dark sexual drama directed by Kim Ki-duk. In Korean. Opening Feb. 18. (Cinema Village.)

BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE
An adaptation of the children's book in which a young girl (Annasophia Robb) adopts an abandoned dog when she moves to a new town in Florida. Directed by Wayne Wang. Opening Feb. 18.

CINEVARDAPHOTO
Three cinematic essays by the filmmaker Agnès Varda about the nature of photography, including Varda's own pictures of Cuba and the story of a German woman who collects portraits of Teddy bears. In French. Opening Feb. 16. (Film Forum.)

CONSTANTINE
A man with supernatural abilities (Keanu Reeves) helps a police detective (Rachel Weisz) solve the murder of her sister, in a thriller based on the comic book "Hellblazer." With Tilda Swinton and Djimon Hounsou. Directed by Francis Lawrence. Opening Feb. 18.

DOWNFALL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 18. (Film Forum.)

HARRY AND MAX
Christopher Munch ("The Sleepy Time Gal") directed this drama, in which a former boy-band idol (Bryce Johnson) takes his younger brother (Cole Williams) on a camping trip in California. Opening Feb. 18. (Quad Cinemas.)

HITCH
Will Smith plays a professional dating coach, in a romantic comedy set in New York City. With Eva Mendes and Kevin James. Directed by Andy Tennant. Opening Feb. 11.

IMAGINARY HEROES
The début drama from the writer-director Dan Harris chronicles a year in the life of a dysfunctional upper-middle-class family. With Sigourney Weaver, Jeff Daniels, Emile Hirsch, and Michelle Williams. Opening Feb. 18. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

INSIDE DEEP THROAT
Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato's documentary about the controversial, profitable, and influential 1972 porn film. Opening Feb. 11. (Sunshine Cinema.)

MY MOTHER'S SMILE
Marco Bellocchio wrote and directed this drama, in which a middle-aged Italian atheist (Sergio Castellitto) learns that his late mother is a candidate for sainthood. In Italian. Opening Feb. 11. (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
A martial-arts movie featuring the Thai kickboxer Tony Jaa. Directed by Prachya Pinkaew. In Thai. Opening Feb. 18.

POOH'S HEFFALUMP MOVIE
An animated adventure for Pooh and friends, with original songs by Carly Simon and voices by Jim Cummings and Brenda Blethyn. Directed by Frank Nissen. Opening Feb. 18.

SCHULTZE GETS THE BLUES
In a drama directed by Michael Schorr, an unemployed German salt miner (Horst Krause) develops a passion for zydeco. In German and English. Opening Feb. 18.

SON OF THE MASK
The toddler son of a cartoonist discovers the troublesome mask of Loki, in a comedy sequel directed by Lawrence Guterman. Opening Feb. 18.

TURTLES CAN FLY
Bahman Ghobadi's drama tells the story of refugee children in the Kurdish enclaves of northern Iraq on the eve of the American invasion. In Kurdish. Opening Feb. 18. (Quad Cinema.)

THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL
A documentary about the homeless musician Mark Bittner, who cares for a flock of birds in San Francisco. Directed by Judy Irving. Opening Feb. 11. (Angelika Film Center.)

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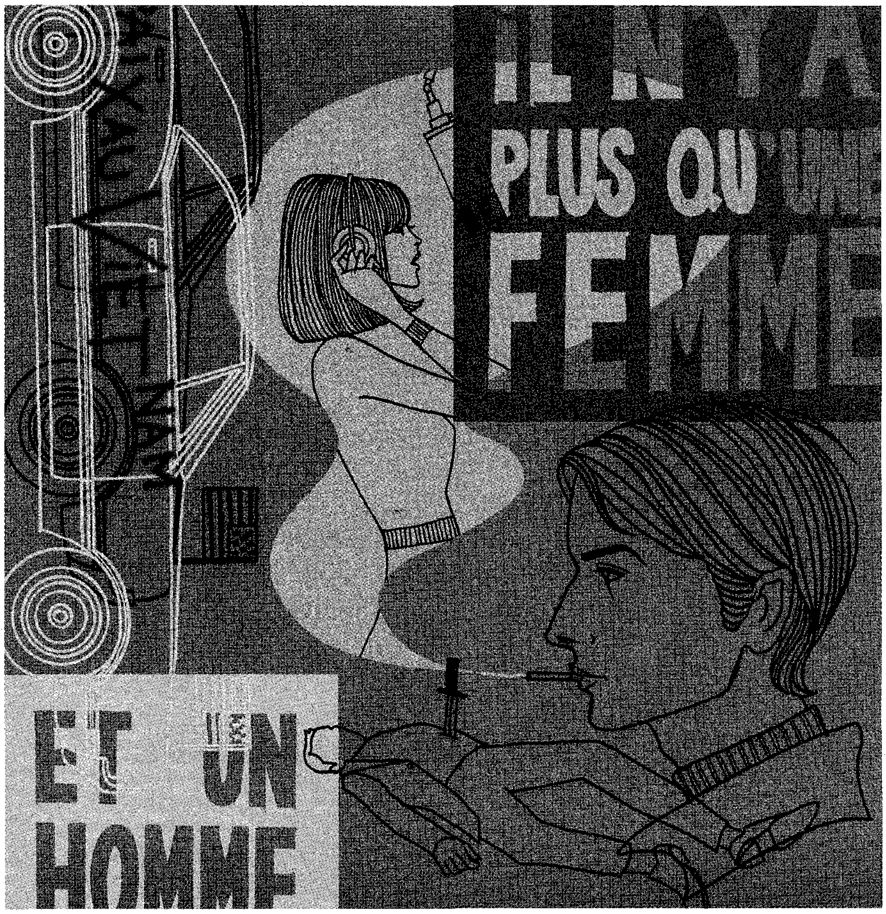
FILM NOTES

ALICE ADAMS
Katharine Hepburn, with her young, beautiful angularity and her faintly absurd Bryn Mawr accent, is superbly cast as Booth Tarkington's eager, desperate small-town social climber. Her Alice is one of the few authentic American movie heroines. George Stevens directed with such a fine sense of detail and milieu that the small-town nagging-family atmosphere is nerve-rackingly accurate and funny. Alice is cursed with a pushing mother (Ann Shoemaker), an infantile father (Fred Stone), and a vulgar brother (Frank Albertson). The picture is cursed only by a fake happy ending: Alice gets what the movie companies considered a proper Prince Charming for her—Fred MacMurray, as a wealthy young man. Even with this flaw, it's a classic, and Hepburn gives one of her two or three finest performances—rivalled, perhaps, only by her work in "Little Women" and "Long Day's Journey Into Night." With Hattie McDaniel, Evelyn Venable, and Hedda Hopper as a rich bitch. Released in 1935.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 17.)

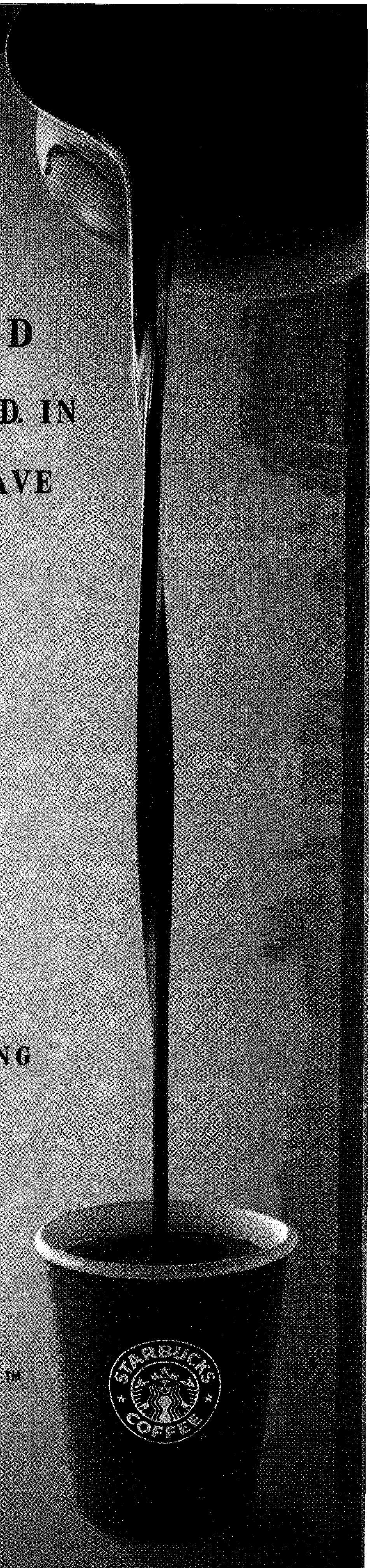
ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
Ethan Hawke stars in this tense and involving update of John Carpenter's influential 1976 police action thriller, which was in turn based on the 1959 Howard Hawks Western, "Rio Bravo." The director, Jean-François Richet, opens the film with a slam-bang drug deal gone wrong and then slows things down for some character development—a decision that feels truly retro. The bulk of the film takes place inside a police station that's being attacked by a bunch of crooked cops. The cast includes Laurence Fishburne, Maria Bello, Ja Rule, and Drea de Matteo, all of whom give strong, no-frills performances. There's a simplicity to Richet's staging of the assault that harks back to the gritty, muscular work of Don Siegel, the director of such films as "Dirty Harry" and "The Shootist."—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

ASSISTED LIVING
Elliot Greenebaum's careful, elegiac film is about the final work day of a numbed-out nursing-home janitor (Michael Bonsignore) and his interactions with an Alzheimer's patient (Maggie Reilly). The semidocumentary feel of the film, which was shot at an old-age home in Kentucky, and the extraordinary lived-in faces of the residents make for a transforming, moving experience. The beautifully nuanced performances of Bonsignore and Reilly as they reach out and awaken each other create a hushed intimacy, and Greenebaum pays reverent attention to the quotidian details of the lives of the aged (the putting on of a slipper, the combing of hair). The movie may sound treacly, but it's not; there are some rough edges to Bonsignore's character that are not smoothed out and an ambiguous ending that feels right.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)



At Film Forum, Jean-Luc Godard's 1966 film "Masculine Feminine."

HIROSHI TANABE



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THE AVIATOR
The billionaire madman, the taloned hermit of Las Vegas eating nothing but steak and peas—that was the haggard face in the tabloids that millions of us knew in the years before Howard Hughes's death, in 1976. Martin Scorsese's brilliantly entertaining movie goes back to the period when Hughes (Leonardo DiCaprio) was an exhilaratingly handsome and daring young man. The narrative, concocted by the screenwriter John Logan, is not meant to be taken literally. It's a fantasia about a studly capitalist prince who produces and directs movies, designs and flies airplanes, and sleeps with dozens of beautiful actresses and starlets. Scorsese and the designer Dante Ferretti press the young tycoon into the svelte Art Deco look of the period; in his tuxedos and casual beige flying duds, Hughes becomes the pictorial embodiment of restless bravado. Toward the end, there are glimpses of the germ-haunted paranoid that Hughes would become, but the movie is consistently lighthearted and engaging, a sort of pop "Citizen Kane." With Cate Blanchett doing a nervy imitation of Katharine Hepburn, Alec Baldwin as Hughes's rival, and Alan Alda as the corrupt Maine senator Owen Brewster.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/20 & 27/04.) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BORN INTO BROTHELS
Watching Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman's prize-winning documentary, shot in Calcutta's Sonagachi red-light district, where Briski lived, on and off, for years, one is initially held by the sensuousness of the colors and the beauty of the children—the offspring of prostitutes, eight, nine, twelve years old, who are growing up in the district and are surely heading into prostitution themselves. Then the "plot" of the movie kicks in. Briski gives the children cameras and teaches them to take pictures of their surroundings; they gain a sense of themselves, and they master a craft. But will Briski be able to get them out of the brothels (where their parents need them for economic reasons) and into decent schools? One is aware of Briski as a rather aggressive guardian angel from the West, who comes in and tries to save only a few children, but she's hardheaded and effective, and her quest makes sense. The colors remain alluring and the children radiant right to the end.—*D.D.* (Film Forum.)

FINDING NEVERLAND
Marc Forster, the director who brought us "Monster's Ball," has turned his attention—as one does—from Halle Berry to J. M. Barrie. The diminutive Scottish author is played by Johnny Depp, in a loose fantasia on the genesis of "Peter Pan." Barrie meets some young boys in a London park, and from his friendship with them and their widowed mother (Kate Winslet) he conjures a story of a child who cannot, or will not, grow up. The fact that the film takes liberties with the historical record (there were five brothers, for instance, not four) is a minor affair; more misguided is the reliance on whimsy, at moments where the real Barrie was straightforward, even chilly, in his imaginings. At other times, however, the movie's air of slightness and evanescence feels touching and right, and, if the result strikes you as too weepy for its own good, consider that the actual story of Barrie and his "Lost Boys"—some of whom met untimely deaths—was worse and more troubling by far. With Julie Christie, Dustin Hoffman, and, in the role of a real Peter, the clear and unsentimental Freddie Highmore.—*Anthony Lane* (East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE FOG
At the core of John Carpenter's 1980 horror fantasy is a nineteenth-century homicide scandal. The six founding fathers of a Northern California town set a false signal fire during a night of thick fog, leading a ship carrying a leper colony to break up on the rocks; then the town fathers made away with the lepers' money. A hundred years later the lepers rise again, shrouded by the same fog and hungering for revenge. Though the cast includes Hal Holbrook, John Houseman, Janet Leigh, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Adrienne Barbeau, the real star is the fog. Its phosphorescent vapors are as otherworldly as the cascading clouds in Howard Hughes's "Hell's Angels." When the living dead come in over the picturesque coastline, they're souls fighting their way out of a palpable limbo. But the story line is foggy, too (are the lepers after the descendants of the half-dozen founding fathers, or everybody?), and Carpenter sullies his well-crafted effects with cheap ones like bottles crashing off grocery shelves and a corpse jumping off a pathologist's table.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Feb. 22.)

HOTEL RWANDA
Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Rwandan manager of the four-star Hôtel des Mille Collines, in Kigali, wears a blue suit and tie and is very polite, even deferential, toward everyone. Paul works for the Belgian company that owns the hotel, which has become an oasis for Europeans and for African élites. When the Hutu massacres of the Tutsi minority begin, in the spring of 1994, Paul keeps the Mille Collines running. He also, on the sly, establishes it as a haven for both Hutu and Tutsi fugitives, keeping them momentarily safe from the machete-wielding militia, who kill eight hundred thousand people in a few months. Working in Rwanda and

Opening February 18, the supernatural thriller "Constantine."

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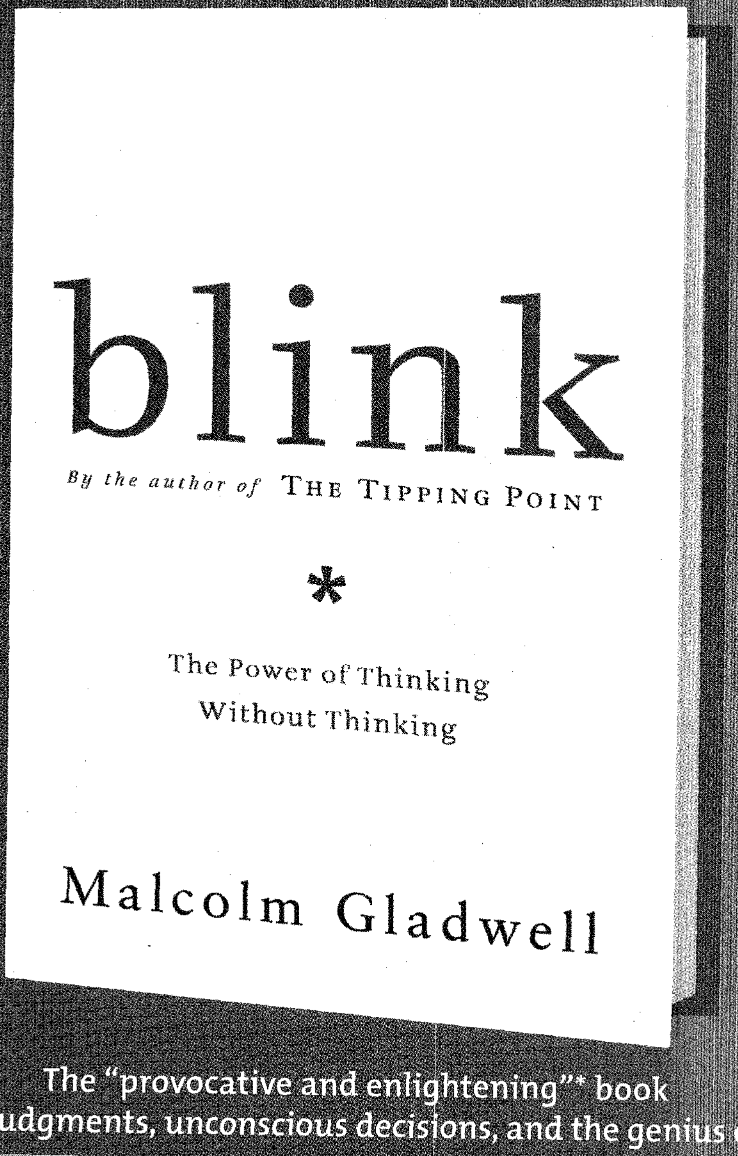

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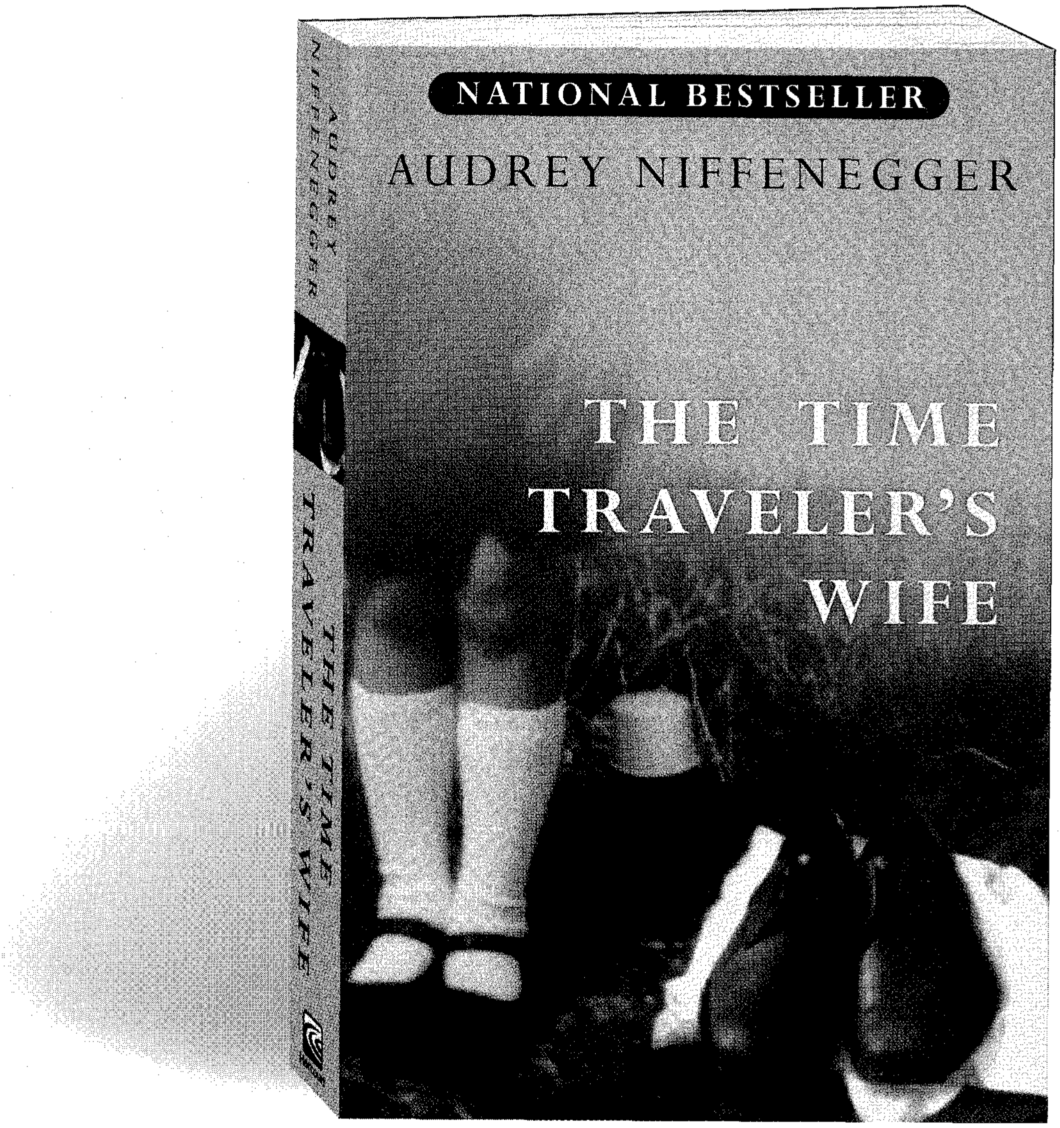
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South Africa, the writer-director, Terry George, convincingly stages the horrors outside the hotel: the paralyzing fear in the night, the vilely inciting radio broadcasts, the chaos and arbitrary madness of the slaughter. But the true drama of "Hotel Rwanda" lies in the character of Paul, who is betrayed by the Europeans who formed him but who holds to his belief in civility, right through the worst disasters. The movie is a triumph for Cheadle—he never steps outside the character for emotional grandstanding or easy moralism.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS
Not a sequel to "Hero," the fantastical hit of the summer, but a chance for the same director, Zhang Yimou, to paint the screen red with his luscious and newly invigorated style. In the middle of the ninth century, two regional policemen (Andy Lau and Takeshi Kaneshiro) take on the might of the Flying Daggers, a furtive antigovernment organization. Their first break is to arrest Mei (Ziyi Zhang), a blind dancer who has all sorts of tricks up her sleeves, most of them liable to cut your throat. One cop goes undercover, hoping that Mei can be seduced into revealing the villains' lair. There is an unembarrassed scent of melodrama to all this, as if Zhang's plot had been infected by the excess of his violent ballets—the knives, arrows, kicks, and leaps with which every contest is resolved, and by which the characters demonstrate their respect for one another and their scorn for the laws of physics. At some point, though, the poise falters, and the movie, unlike "Hero," tips into silliness; in the lust to register nothing but beautiful patterns of movement, the claims of logic, political fear, and even love are blithely blown away. In Mandarin.—*A.L.* (12/13/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, and Union Square.)

IN GOOD COMPANY
Topher Grace, almost unimaginably slender and young-looking, displaces the solid, rooted, fiftyish husband and father Dennis Quaid as the head of ad sales for an established sports magazine. Grace is now the boss, and though he knows how to deliver conglomerate-synergy spiel and get people "psyched" he hasn't a clue as to how to live his life. This brilliant orphan boy then falls in love with Quaid's college-age daughter, Scarlett Johansson. Paul Weitz's movie is synthetically plotted, but it has been written and directed with a heartening sensitivity, and Grace and Johansson are adorable together. Weitz offers some sharp (and not inaccurate) thrusts at the nastier side of corporate "culture." A commercial comedy made by people who know what they are doing.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU
The latest movie from Wes Anderson, after "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums," marks another bid to swim away from the mainstream. Bill Murray plays Steve Zissou, an old-style explorer of the seas, who could easily be a mad American cousin, twice removed, of Jacques Cousteau. Steve has a tall, peculiar wife (Anjelica Huston) and an even taller and more peculiar rival (Jeff Goldblum). The plot, such as it is, concerns the hunting down of a jaguar shark, which has chewed up one of Steve's associates; at the same time, our hero is coping with the appearance of a young man (Owen Wilson) who claims to be his son. This level of weirdness could, in other hands, appear forced and willful, but Anderson seems at ease with his conceits, allowing his cast—which includes Willem Dafoe and, with a ringing British accent, Cate Blanchett—to relax into the demands of deadpan. Hardly anybody here looks young, and we can only guess at the experiences that have aged them, tested them, and cloaked them in Anderson's brand of sadness. Set against that, we get joyous bursts of David Bowie: "Space Oddity," "Rebel Rebel," and other hits, many of them transposed, naturally enough, into Portuguese. With silly, fetching marine animation sequences by Henry Selick.—*A.L.* (1/17/05) (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

MASCULINE FEMININE
To this day, not many people have seen the one film of Jean-Luc Godard's that can unmistakably be called charming—"Masculine Feminine," a lyrical 1966 essay on "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola." The characters are Parisian youth chasing each other in and out of coffee bars and bed, particularly Jean-Pierre Léaud, as a not very serious radical, and Chantal Goya, a magazine photo editor who wants to be a *yé-yé* singer. The movie offers no more than fragments of narrative—just enough to suggest the elements of a love roundelay—interspersed with topical jokes, non sequiturs, journalistic interludes, and interviews with young people, including one entrancing six-minute single take of a "dialogue with a consumer product," a fetching girl known as "Miss Nineteen." Godard, poised between adoration and satire, seems at once entranced by the good looks of his characters and amused by their shallowness. Lighthearted and glancing in style, "Masculine Feminine" is nevertheless melancholy in mood—the shallowness makes the transience of youthful beauty that much more heartbreaking. Reissued in a crisp new print, with subtitles newly translated by Lenny Borger. In French.—*D.D.* (Film Forum; Feb. 11-22.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
Michael Radford's film of "The Merchant of Venice" stars Al Pacino as Shylock, and the look of him—heavy of tread, eyes darting and wary—defines the encompassing mood. The text has been sliced and pared, and what remains is intimate and sorrowful, as if the characters knew from the start what manner of tribulation they would face. Antonio (Jeremy Irons) seems already to be mourning the loss not just of his ships at sea but of his friend Bassanio (Joseph Fiennes) to the wealthy and marriageable Portia (Lynn Collins). Her early scenes are the weakest in the movie, the comedy of the semi-fantastic sitting uneasily amid the gathering gloom. What Radford does best—and it's a trick he mislaid in the slower niceties of "Il Postino"—is to shove and wheedle the story along, so that the court scene and even the final bickering over marital rings take on the air not merely of patchings-up but of bristling suspense. Much is at stake here, and, to judge by Pacino's burning gaze, the loser, in so villainous a society, is never really in doubt.—*A.L.* (1/3/05) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Village East Cinemas.)

MILLION DOLLAR BABY
Much of Clint Eastwood's evocative and poetic boxing movie is set in the Hit Pit, a moldy, sweat-stained downtown Los Angeles gym in which crusty veterans train a few serious fighters and many hapless punks. Scrap (Morgan Freeman), an ex-fighter with one functioning eye, works at the gym and exchanges affectionately nasty remarks with the owner, one Frankie Dunn (Eastwood). Against his better judgment, Frankie agrees to take on a tough country woman, Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank), who, not entirely to our surprise, rapidly becomes the hottest fighter in the sordid but lucrative world of women's boxing. The story, adapted by Paul Haggis from F. X. Toole's collection, "Rope Burns," is borderline trite, but the movie has the sweet melancholy of a great jazz piece.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 34th Street Theatre.)

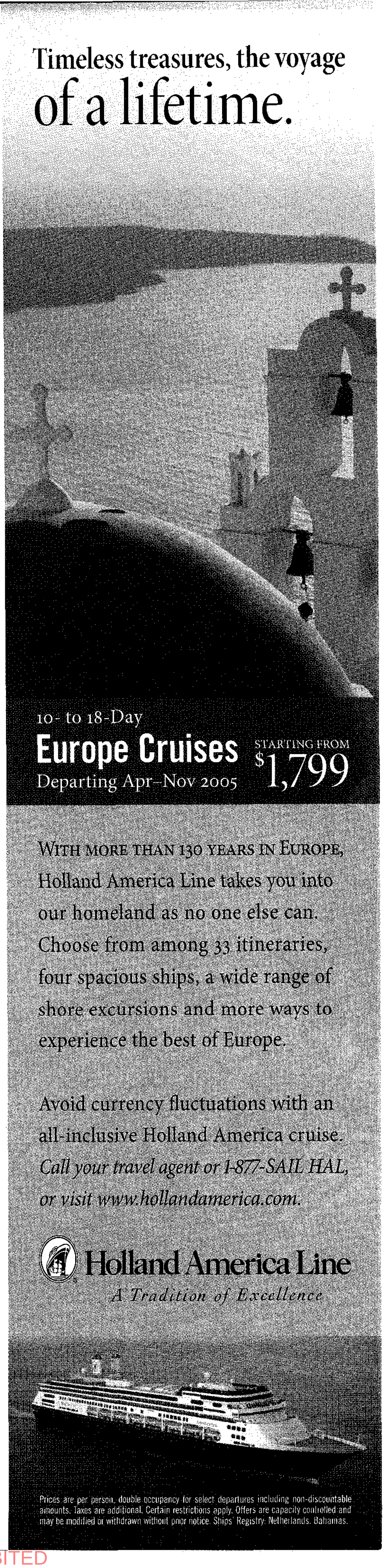
ALSO PLAYING

BAD EDUCATION (11/22/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

NOBODY KNOWS (2/7/05)
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.

RAY (11/8/04)
Empire 25 and Quad Cinema.

SIDEWAYS (10/25/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
MetroTwin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—A retrospective of the Taiwanese New Wave director Hou Hsiao-Hsien. Feb. 9 at 7 and 9:30 and Feb. 13 at 6:30: "Flowers of Shanghai" (1998). ♦ Feb. 10 at 7 and 9:15 and Feb. 13 at 9: "Millennium Mambo" (2001). ♦ Feb. 11 at 7 and Feb. 13 at 4:30: "Daughter of the Nile" (1987). ♦ Feb. 11 at 9 and Feb. 14 at 7:30: "A City of Sadness" (1989). ♦ Feb. 12 at 4: "Good Men, Good Women" (1995). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6:30: "The Puppetmaster" (1993). ♦ Feb. 12 at 9:30: "Goodbye South, Goodbye" (1996). ♦ "Short Films by Big Directors." Feb. 11 at 8: Georges Franju et al. ♦ Feb. 12 at 8: Roberto Rossellini et al. ♦ "Essential Cinema." The foreign-language films are presented without subtitles. Feb. 12 at 6: "Pickpocket" (1959, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Feb. 13 at 6: "Les Dames du Bois de Bologne" (1944, Bresson; in French). ♦ Feb. 13 at 8: "Une Femme Douce" (1969, Bresson; in French). ♦ Feb. 18 at 8: "L'Âge d'Or" (1930, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 6: "Entr'acte" (1924, René Clair and Francis Picabia), "Un Chien Andalou" (1928, Buñuel), and "Land Without Bread" (1932, Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 19 at 8: "Los Olvidados" (1950, Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 20 at 5:30: "The Blood of a Poet" (1930, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ Feb. 20 at 8: "La Belle et la Bête" (1946, Cocteau; in French). ♦ "Unessential Cinema." Feb. 17 at 8: A special presentation of unclaimed amateur film reels from the seventies. ♦ Feb. 18-20: "Kurt Kren and Viennese Actionist Film." ♦ "Storefront Films." Feb. 22 at 7:30: "Canal Zone" (1974, Frederick Wiseman).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—The Best of the African Diaspora Film Festival. Feb. 11 at 2 and Feb. 17 at 4:30: "Denying Brazil" (2003, Joel Zito Araujo; in Portuguese). ♦ Feb. 11 at 4:30: "Lord Have Mercy" (2003, Frances-Anne Solomon). ♦ Feb. 11 at 6 and Feb. 14 at 9:15: "The Tracker" (2002, Rolf de Heer). ♦ Feb. 11 at 9:15, Feb. 14 at 6:50, and Feb. 15 at 4:30: "Silence: In Search of Black Female Sexuality" (2004, Maya B). ♦ Feb. 12 at 2: "Kirikou and the Sorceress" (1988, Michel Ocelot). ♦ Feb. 12 at 4:30 and Feb. 13 at 2: "Au Pair Chocolat" (2004, Benson McGrath). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6:50 and Feb. 17 at 9:15: "Raise Your Voice: Sweet Honey in the Rock" (2004, Stanley Nelson). ♦ Feb. 12 at 9:30 and Feb. 15 at 9:15: "How to Conquer America in One Night" (2004, Dany Laferrière; in French). ♦ Feb. 13-14 at 4:30: "Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death" (2003, Peter Bate). ♦ Feb. 13 and Feb. 17 at 6:50: "AfroArgentines" (2002, Diego Ceballos and Jorge Fortes; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 13 at 9:15 and Feb. 15 at 6:50: "Kabala" (2002, Assane Kouyaté; in Bambara). ♦ The films of Henri-Georges Clouzot. Feb. 18 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Raven" (1943; in French). ♦ Feb. 19-20 at 3, 6, and 9: "Wages of Fear" (1953; in French). ♦ Horror films. Feb. 21 at 3 and 9:30: "The Wicker Man" (1973, Robin Hardy). ♦ Feb. 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Fog" (†). ♦ Repertory favorites. Feb. 21 at 6: "Malcolm X: Make It Plain" (1994, Orlando Bagwell).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—New prints. Feb. 9-10 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Los Olvidados" (1950, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 11-22 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "Masculine Feminine" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—A Claire Denis retrospective. All films are in French. Feb. 15 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "À Propos de Nice" (1995) and "I Can't Sleep" (1993). ♦ Feb. 22 at 12:30 and 3:30: "The Hoop Skirt" (1992) and "Nénette et Boni" (1996).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Feb. 9 at 5: "My Left Foot" (1989, Jim Sheridan). ♦ Feb. 9 at 6 and Feb. 13 at 2: "The Youngster of Paris" (1923, Louis Feuillade). ♦ Feb. 9 at 7:30: "Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Wrapped Reichstag" (1996, Wolfram Hissen and Jörg Daniel Hissen). ♦ Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 13 at 4:30: "Pierrot Pierrette" (1923, Feuillade). ♦ Feb. 10 at 5: "Cattle Callers" (2003, Marilia Rocha; in Portuguese). ♦ Feb. 10 at 6:30: "La Cueca Sola" (2003, Marilu Mallet; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 10 at 8:15: Four melodramas by Feuillade. ♦ Feb. 10 at 8:30 and Feb. 14 at 5:30: Three works by Juan Manuel Echavarria. ♦ Feb. 11 at 5:15: "Jockey" (2003, Kate Davis). ♦ Feb. 11 at 5:45 and Feb. 13 at 5: "Getting Out" (2004, George Stoney and David Bagnall). ♦ Feb. 11 at 7:30: "Christo's Valley Curtain" (1974, Albert and David Maysles). ♦ Feb. 11 at 8:30: "Salvador Allende" (2003, Patricio Guzmán; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 12 at 2: "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Feb. 12 at 2 and Feb. 14 at 6:45: "Life Is a Game of Cards" (2003, Philippe de Pierpont; in Bantu and French). ♦ Feb. 12 at 3:30 and Feb. 18 at 7:45: "The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan" (2003, Phil Grabsky; in Dari). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6: "We Shall Overcome" (2004, Dave Thoudam). ♦ Feb. 12 at 8 and Feb. 21 at 5: "Tupperware!" (2004, Laurie Kahn-Leavitt). ♦ Feb. 12 at 8:30 and Feb. 16 at 5:30: "The Colour of Love" (2004, Maryam Keshavarz; in Farsi). ♦ Feb. 13 at 2:30 and Feb. 18 at 6: "Ocoee: Legacy of the Election Day Massacre" (2002, Bianca White and Sandra Krasa). ♦ Feb. 14 at 6: "The Killing" (1956, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Feb. 14 at 8: "Cinevardaphoto" (2004, Agnès Varda; in French). ♦ Feb. 14 at 8:15 and Feb. 21 at 8:30: "Still Life" (2004, Cynthia Madansky). ♦ Feb. 16 at 8: "Ju Dou" (1990, Zhang Yimou; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 16 at 8:30: Seven comedies by Feuillade. ♦ Feb. 17 at 5:30: "Thunder in Guyana" (2003, Suzanne Wasserman). ♦ Feb. 17 at 6:30: "Alice Adams" (†). ♦ Feb. 17 at 7:30: "Wrapped Coast" (1969, Michael Blackwood). ♦ Feb. 17 at 8:30: "Frames" (2003, Henry Corra and Charlene Rule). ♦ Feb. 18 at 5:30: "A Place in the Sun" (1951, George Stevens). ♦ Feb. 18 at 7:45: "Giant" (1956, Stevens). ♦ Feb. 19 at 2: "The Talk of the Town" (1942, Stevens). ♦ Feb. 19 at 2:30: "Repatriation" (2003, Kim Dong-won; in Korean). ♦ Feb. 19 at 5: "The More the Merrier" (1943, Stevens). ♦ Feb. 19 at 5:30: "Edit" (2003, Changjae Lee; in Korean). ♦ Feb. 19 at 8: "Woman of the Year" (1942, Stevens). ♦ Feb. 19 at 8: "Beer and Hankies" (2001, Julia Barco). ♦ Feb. 20 at 2 and Feb. 21 at 6: "Swing Time" (1936, Stevens). ♦ Feb. 20 at 2:30: "Bonjour Tristesse" (1958, Otto Preminger). ♦ Feb. 20 at 4: Academy Award-nominated shorts (2004). ♦ Feb. 20 at 5: "Islands" (1986, the Maysles brothers and Charlotte Zwerin). ♦ Feb. 21 at 6:30: "Conakry Kas" (2003, Manthia Diawara; in French). ♦ Feb. 22 at 8: "A Damsel in Distress" (1937, Stevens).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Feb. 13: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Feb. 12 at 2: "Poison" (1991, Dennis Lim). ♦ Feb. 12 at 4: "Red Dust" (1932, Victor Fleming). ♦ Feb. 13 at 2: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Feb. 13 at 4: "Star 80" (1983, Bob Fosse). ♦ Starting Feb. 19: "Digital Masters." Feb. 19 at 2: "The Book of Life" (1997, Hal Hartley). ♦ Feb. 19 at 4:15: "The Girl from Monday" (2005, Hartley). ♦ Feb. 20 at 2: "Tape" (2001, Richard Linklater). ♦ Feb. 20 at 4: "Waking Life" (2001, Linklater). ♦ Repertory nights. Feb. 12-13 at 6:30: "That Obscure Object of Desire" (1977, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Feb. 18 at 7:30 and Feb. 19-20 at 6:30: "Band of Outsiders" (1964, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

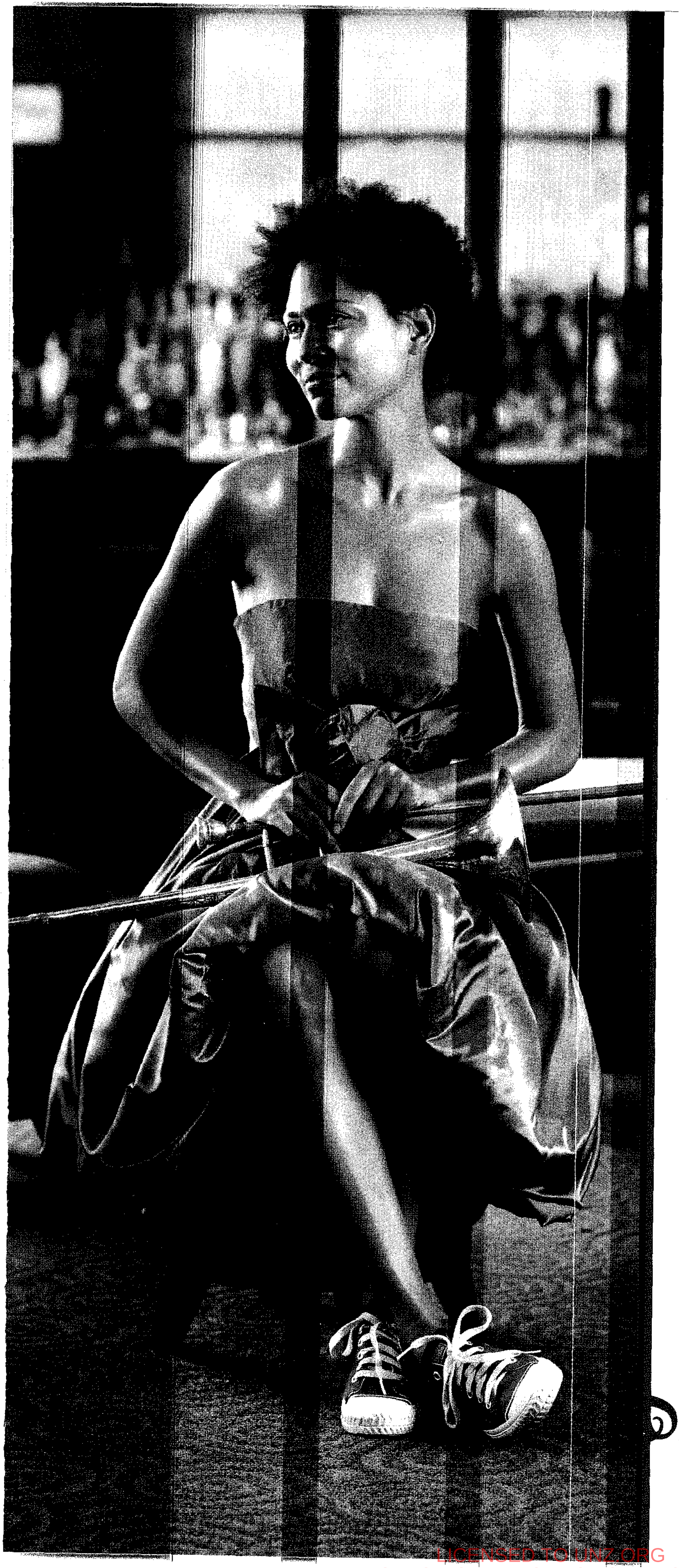
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Feb. 11-12: "Annie Hall" (1977, Woody Allen). ♦ Feb. 18-20: "The Goonies" (1985, Richard Donner).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Children's movies. Feb. 12 at 11 A.M. and 2: "Mr. Bug Goes to Town" (1941, David Fleischer). ♦ Repertory films. Feb. 13 at 2: "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex" (1972, Woody Allen). ♦ Feb. 13 at 4:15: "Kiss Me, Stupid" (1964, Billy Wilder). ♦ Feb. 20 at 2: "Never Give a Sucker an Even Break" (1941, Edward F. Cline). ♦ Feb. 20 at 4: "A Night at the Opera" (1935, Sam Wood).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Feb. 24: "*Film Comment* Selects." Feb. 9 at 4 and 9: "Oldboy" (2003, Park Chan-wook; in Korean). ♦ Feb. 9 at 6:30: "Clean" (2004, Olivier Assayas). ♦ Feb. 10 at 4, Feb. 12 at 2, and Feb. 14 at 6:15: "At Five in the Afternoon" (2003, Samira Makmalbaf; in Farsi). ♦ Feb. 10 at 6:15 and Feb. 12 at 6:45: "Vital" (2004, Shinya Tsukamoto; in Japanese). ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: "Downfall" (2004, Oliver Hirchbiegel; in German). ♦ Feb. 11 at 1:30 and Feb. 12 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Izo" (2004, Takashi Miike; in Japanese). ♦ Feb. 11 at 4 and 8:30 and Feb. 15 at 6:30: "Le Pont des Arts" (2004, Eugene Green; in French). ♦ Feb. 11 at 6:30: "Turtles Can Fly" (†). ♦ Feb. 13 at 2: "The Ister" (2004, David Barison and Daniel Ross). ♦ Feb. 13 at 7 and Feb. 18 at 8:30: "Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance" (2002, Park; in Korean). ♦ Feb. 14 at 4:15 and Feb. 15 at 4:30 and 9: "Secret File" (2003, Paolo Benvenuti; in Italian). ♦ Feb. 14 at 8:30 and Feb. 18 at 6:15: "Ma Mère" (2004, Christophe Honoré; in French). ♦ Feb. 16 at 3 and 7: "Fixed Bayonet" (1951, Sam Fuller). ♦ Feb. 16 at 5 and 9: "Steel Helmet" (1950, Fuller). ♦ Feb. 17 at 4 and 9 and Feb. 18 at 4:30: "Los Muertos" (2004, Lisandro Alonso; in Spanish). ♦ Feb. 19 at 12:30, Feb. 20 at 8:45, and Feb. 22 at 3:15: "The Salamander" (1971, Alain Tanner; in French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 3 and Feb. 20 at 6:15: "Le Pont du Nord" (1981, Jacques Rivette; in French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 5:45 and Feb. 20 at 3:45: "Two" (2002, Werner Schroeter; in French). ♦ Feb. 19 at 9 and Feb. 22 at 1: "Mistress" (1973, Barbet Schroeder). ♦ Feb. 20 at 1:30: "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" (1972, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Feb. 21 at 1: "Route 181: Fragments on a Journey in Palestine-Israel" (2004, Eyal Silvan and Michel Kheifi; in Arabic and Hebrew). ♦ Feb. 21 at 7: "Memories of a Murder" (2003, Bong Joon-ho; in Korean).



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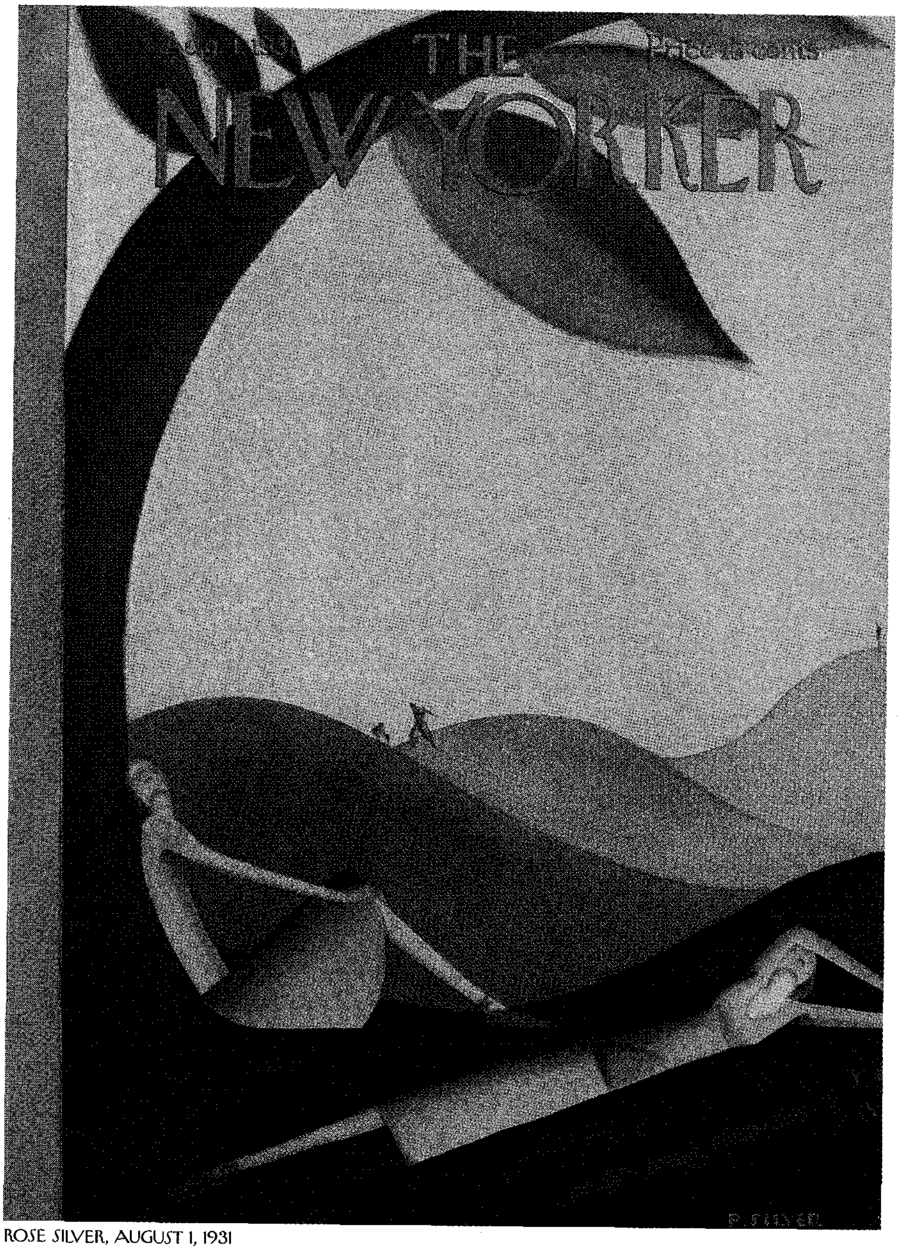
COVER STORIES

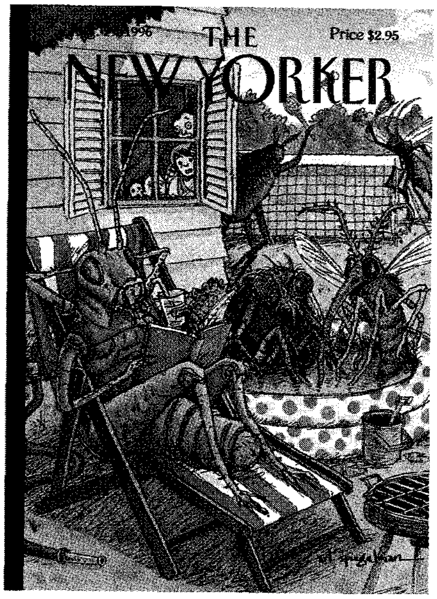
GREAT ESCAPES

There is no better way to enjoy New York than to leave it whenever possible. Besieged by noise, crowds, and stimulation, residents long for harmonious outdoor spaces, such as those depicted in Rose Silver's 1931 cover of curving trees and hills, or in Floc'h's panorama of winter white, from 2001. But these are fantasies. Reality, as Constantin Alajálov's 1941 cover showing a pair of colorful tourists attests, includes a return trip, and it's hard to bring the tropics back with you. Some *New Yorker* artists take their work with them wherever they go, and they tend to be ambivalent about the idea of vacations. Art Spiegelman's equivocal portrait of summer pleasures, from 1996, is echoed by Edward Sorel's equally entomological 2000 cover.

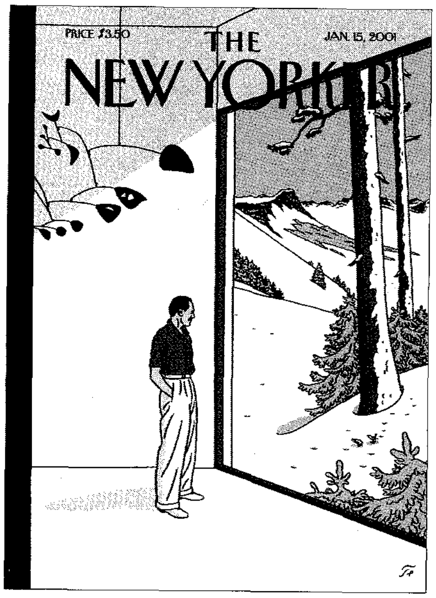
Vacations don't always take place so close to home; consider Mariscal's 1993 Mediterranean tableau. Saul Steinberg's 1963 cover depicts a debate over the comparative pleasures of the Latin Quarter and Sardinia, and Charles D. Saxon's 1971 cover questions the very notion of tropical paradise. Interactions between vacationers and locals are often a source of comedy, as in Alajálov's 1937 cover of two women doing their best to dis-



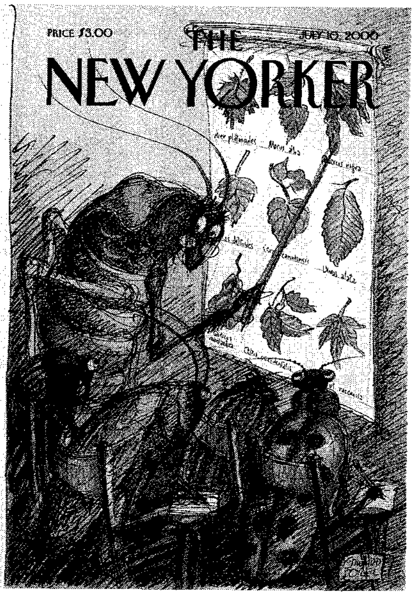
ROSE SILVER, AUGUST 1, 1931



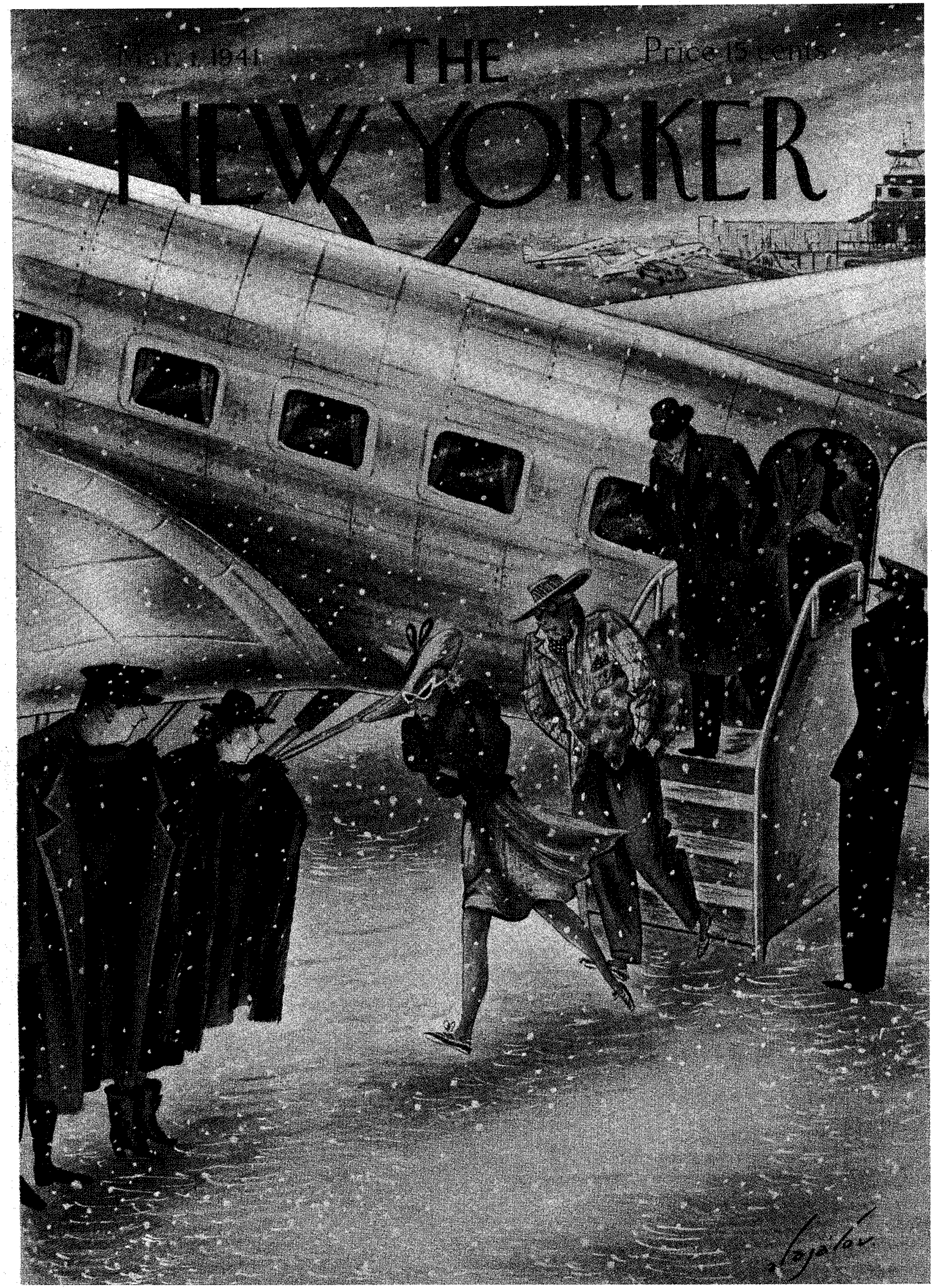
ART SPIEGELMAN, AUGUST 19, 1996



FLOC'H, JANUARY 15, 2001

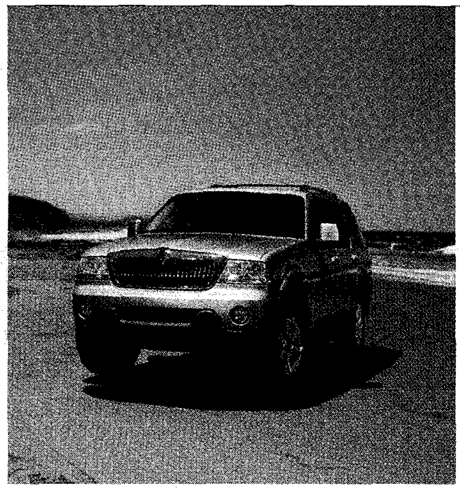


EDWARD SOREL, JULY 10, 2000


Mar. 1, 1941
THE NEW YORKER
Price 15 cents
Alajálov

CONSTANTIN ALAJÁLOV, MARCH 1, 1941

HOT STONE THERAPIES, COLD SEAWEED WRAPS AND THE PROFOUND EFFECT OF TEMPERATURE ON MOOD.



Even at a spa, work can be stressful. Simply rolling back the moonroof* and heading down the coast can make the Lincoln Aviator a moving sanctuary.

Wailea, Maui. Punta Mita, Mexico. Carlsbad, California. These lush destinations draw the stressed-out in search of rejuvenation. As a spa director, Jeremy McCarthy travels the globe creating sanctuaries at some of the world's most luxurious resorts. "More than ever, people today are thinking about wellness. Not just physically, but also how the mind, body and spirit all interrelate to create a healthful state."

Integrating indulgences that invigorate and inspire is the idea behind the Lincoln Aviator. Its THX® Certified Audio System,* for example, can help transform a driver's state of mind. Its cabin, a harmonious mix of satin-nickel and rich leather trim, provides space simply to *breathe*. Luxurious for sure, its heated and cooled front seats* prove functional as well as rejuvenating. McCarthy suggests using the heat option for tight muscles. The cooling option in Aviator's supportive seats can help soothe a tired lower back on a long drive.

Using therapeutic temperature control harkens back to early cultures. "Ancient Hawaiian therapies used stones for healing. The heat is such a benefit to massage because it loosens up the muscles and promotes blood flow to the area being massaged. Following up with the cold therapy calms, soothes and clears out the toxins."

Rejuvenation is not limited to the spa environment. "Simply driving becomes a chance to escape," adds McCarthy. "The time we spend in our vehicle is another opportunity to be still, free our minds of thoughts and concentrate on the act of driving. It's like meditation."

Sanctuary comes in many forms. For today's driver, the sensory journey begins in Lincoln Aviator. For a complete interactive tour of the restorative luxuries available in the Lincoln Aviator, and Jeremy McCarthy's spa recommendations, visit us online.

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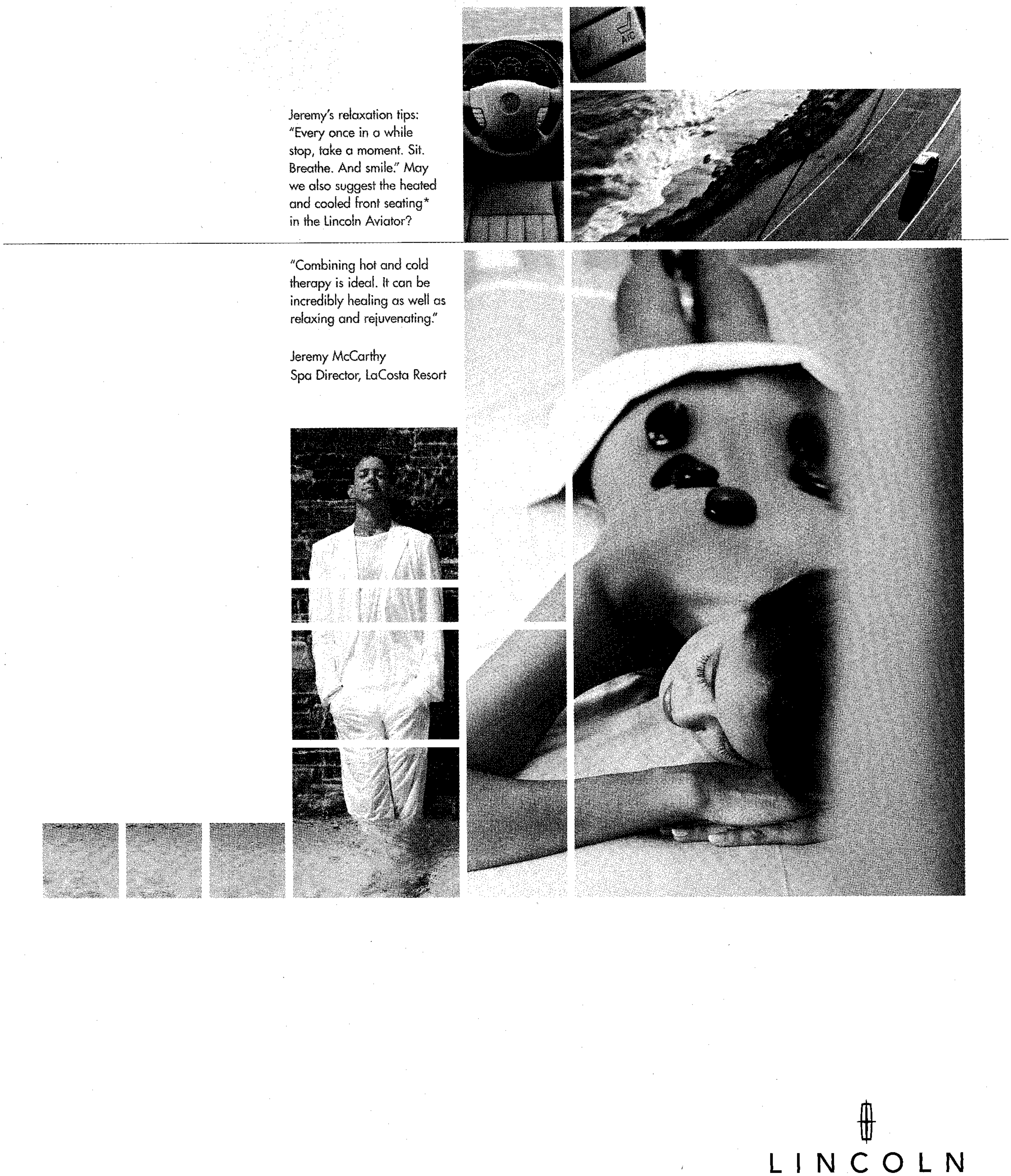


Jeremy's relaxation tips: "Every once in a while stop, take a moment. Sit. Breathe. And smile." May we also suggest the heated and cooled front seating* in the Lincoln Aviator?

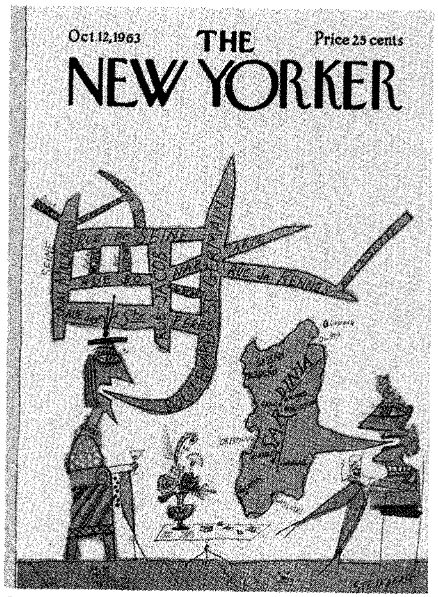
"Combining hot and cold therapy is ideal. It can be incredibly healing as well as relaxing and rejuvenating."

Jeremy McCarthy
Spa Director, LaCosta Resort

LINCOLN

tract a Beefeater; Will Cotton's 1943 bucolic tableau with vacationers and a trio of bovine bathers; and two puckish waterfront scenes, published more than thirty years apart, by Saxon and Peter de Sève. R. Kenton Nelson, in 2003, gets behind the wheel for an image that celebrates the uniquely American phenomenon of the road trip. And, while vacations can bring romance, as in Barbara Shermund's 1939 cover of a man and several interested ladies aboard a cruise ship, they can also bring anxiety to those left behind, as Bruce Eric Kaplan demonstrates with his 2004 depiction of the grim reality of New York in August.

—*F. M.*


Oct.12,1963
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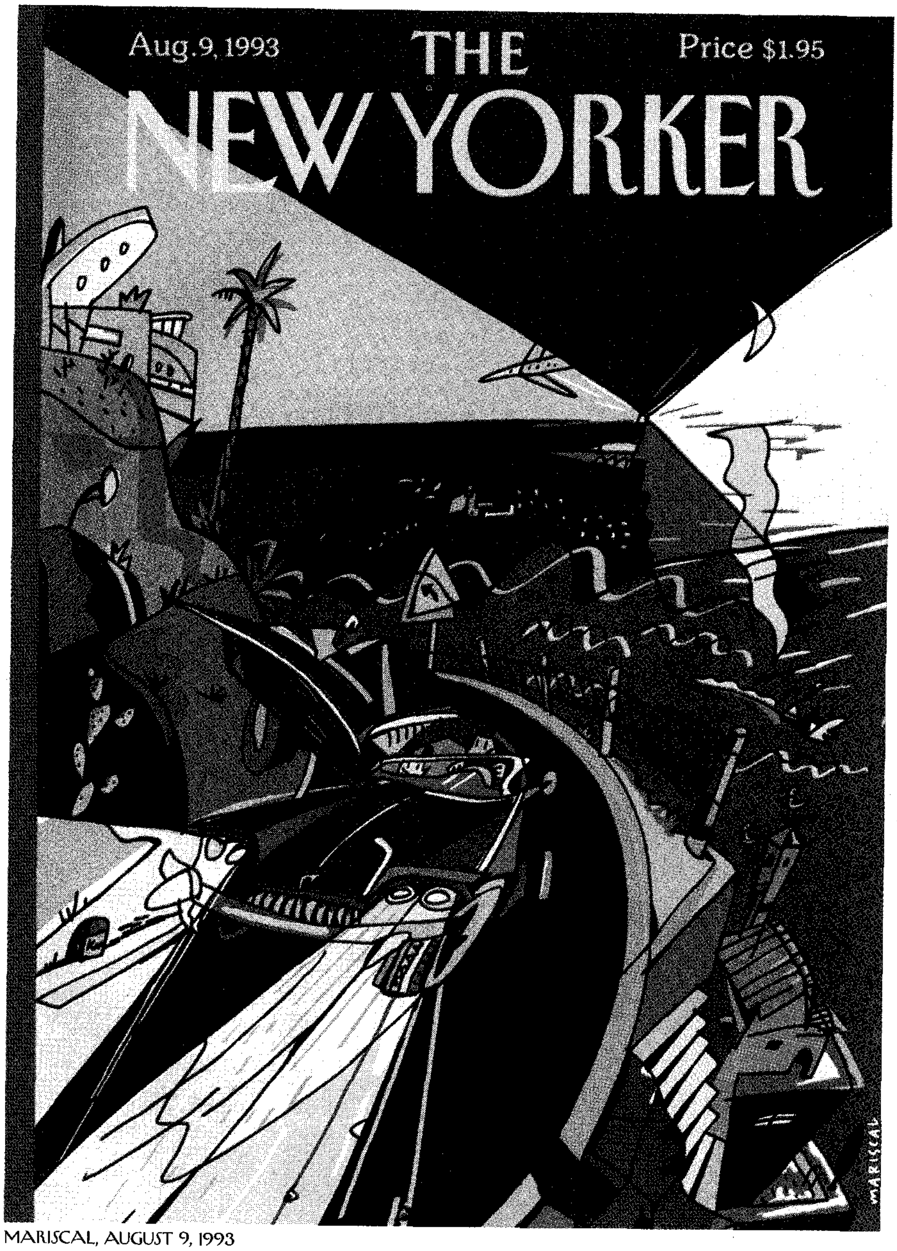
SAUL STEINBERG, OCTOBER 12, 1963


Aug.9,1993
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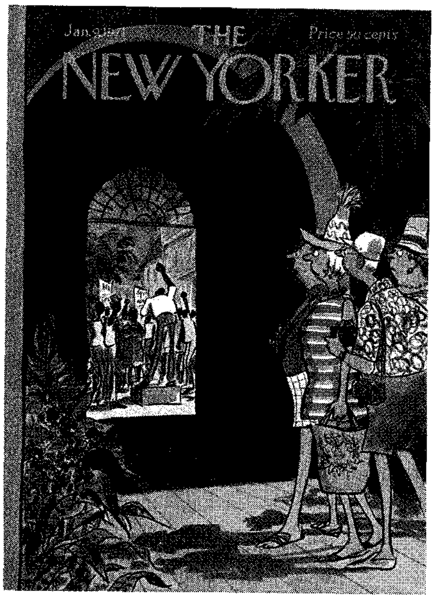
MARISCAL, AUGUST 9, 1993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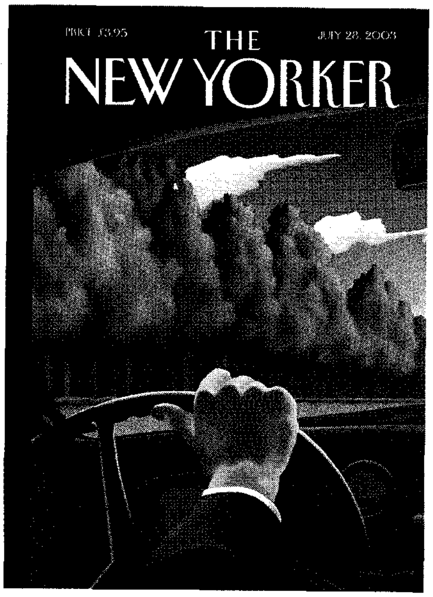
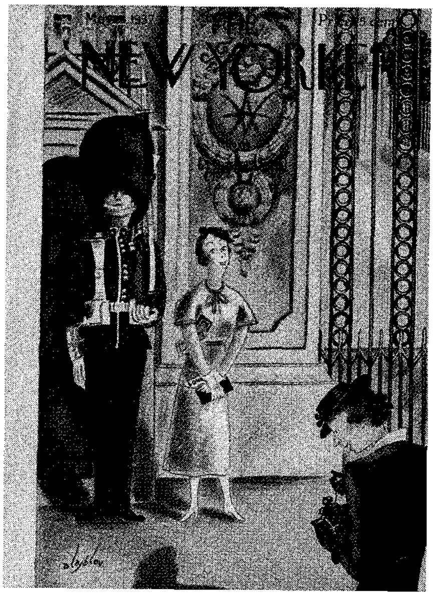
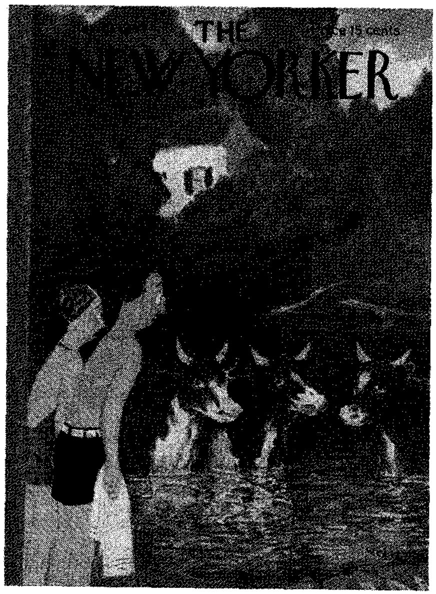
CHARLES D. SAXON, JANUARY 9, 1971


THE NEW YORKER
JULY 28, 2003

R. KENTON NELSON, JULY 28, 2003


THE NEW YORKER

CONSTANTIN ALAJÁLOV, MAY 15, 1937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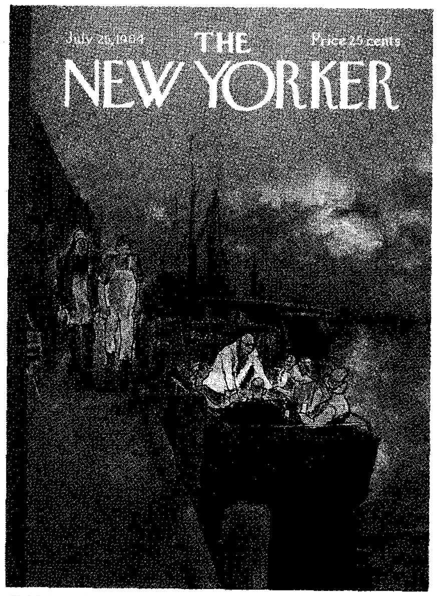
WILL COTTON, JULY 10, 1943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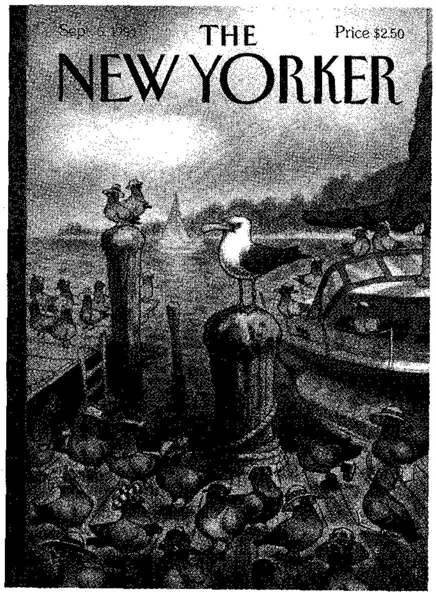
CHARLES D. SAXON, JULY 25, 1964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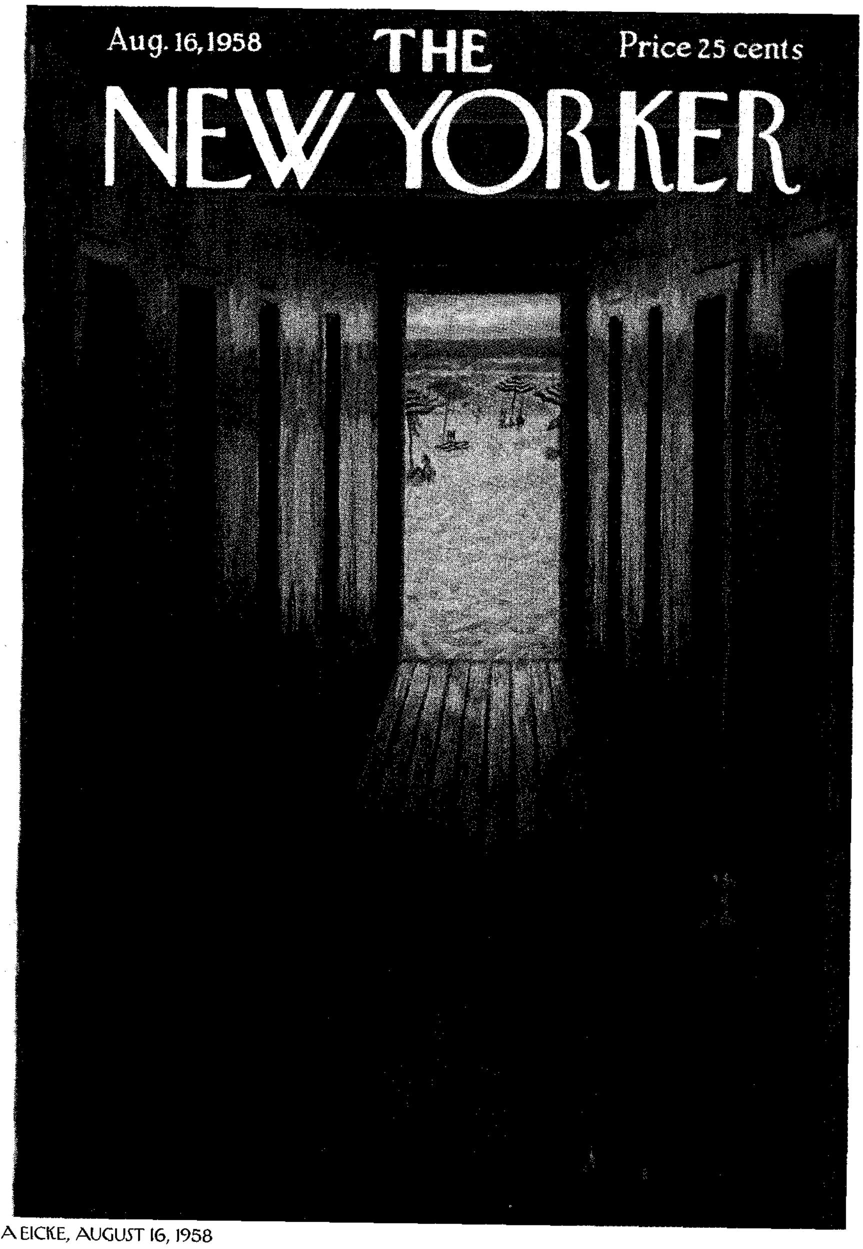
PETER DE SÈVE, SEPTEMBER 5, 1994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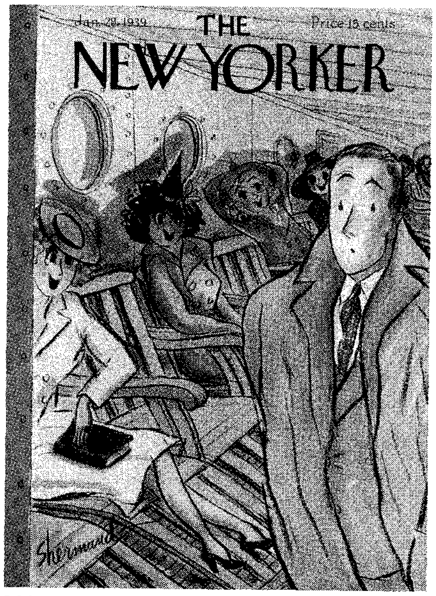
EDNA EICKE, AUGUST 16, 1958


Jan. 28, 1939
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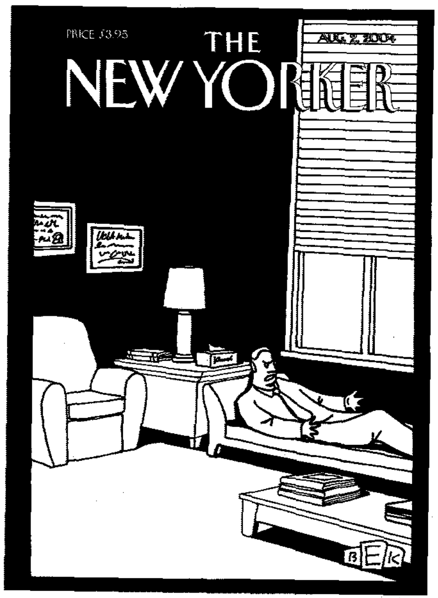
BARBARA SHERMUND, JANUARY 28, 1939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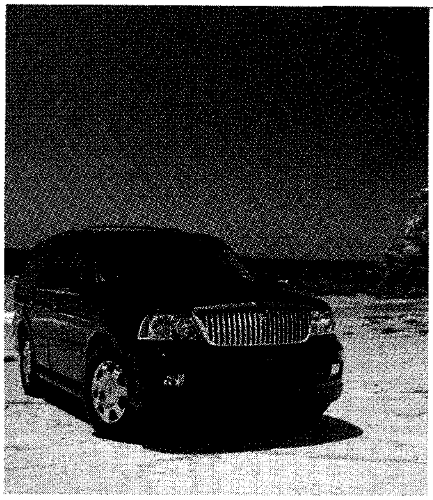
BRUCE ERIC KAPLAN, AUGUST 2, 2004

AGED WALNUT. PAINSTAKING DETAILS.

WHAT ROCK STAR WOULD DARE SMASH THIS?



With its bold form, available power liftgate and top-shelf audio system, recording artists as well as roadies are fans of the Lincoln Navigator.

It took 20 years before Bob Taylor, the guru of guitars, actually liked the instruments he labored over. His passion for guitars, ignited in high school, drove Taylor to hone and refine his handmade guitars to a distinctive sound. Today, Taylor guitars are the prized possessions of rock star legends and spotlight wannabes.

It doesn't happen by accident and it doesn't happen overnight. Taylor's pursuit of perfection can be summed up in one word. Craftsmanship. The fine art of perfecting detail. Taylor has built the Taylor Guitar empire on it. Lincoln Navigator has built a dedicated following on it.

Like the subtle curve of a Taylor guitar neck, the feel of Navigator's walnut steering wheel provides similar gratification. The grip is solid and graceful. Leather upholstery* abounds. Turned, tucked and pleated, it is as much fashion as it is function. Polished satin-nickel accents are as satisfying to the touch as the high-gloss finish of a Taylor six-string.

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Taylor strives for the same feeling. "When someone picks up a Taylor guitar, the shape of the neck feels good in the hands. The ability to transition chords on a fingerboard, high up on the neck, makes all the difference." Artists worldwide agree. The distinctive sound of a Taylor guitar, like Navigator's THX® Certified Audio System,** plays true and clear.

Whether you're facing a six-city tour or a six-lane highway, there is common ground in the uncommon craftsmanship of a Navigator. Go online for Bob Taylor's inside tour of guitars and Navigator amenities.

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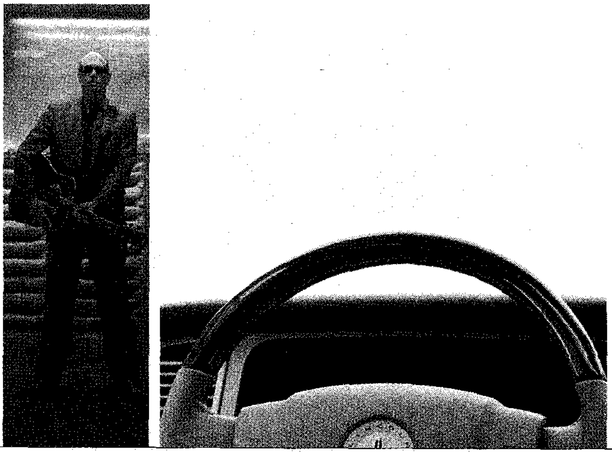

Bob Taylor,
Co-founder of Taylor Guitars

Taylor began using walnut in his guitars back in the '70s for its beauty. Another place where walnut is at home: the Navigator.

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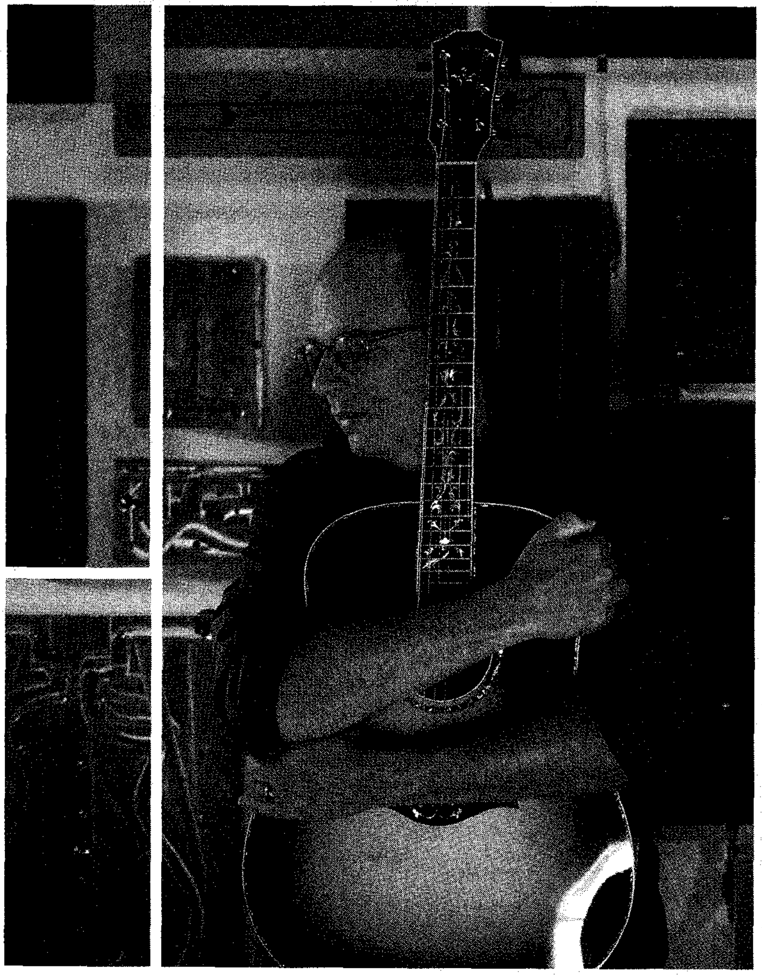
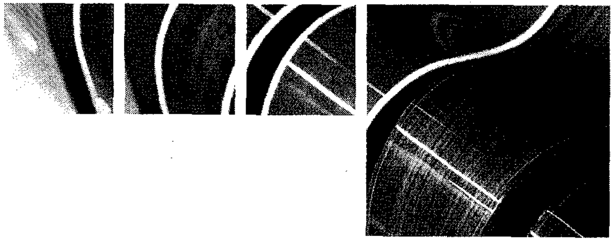
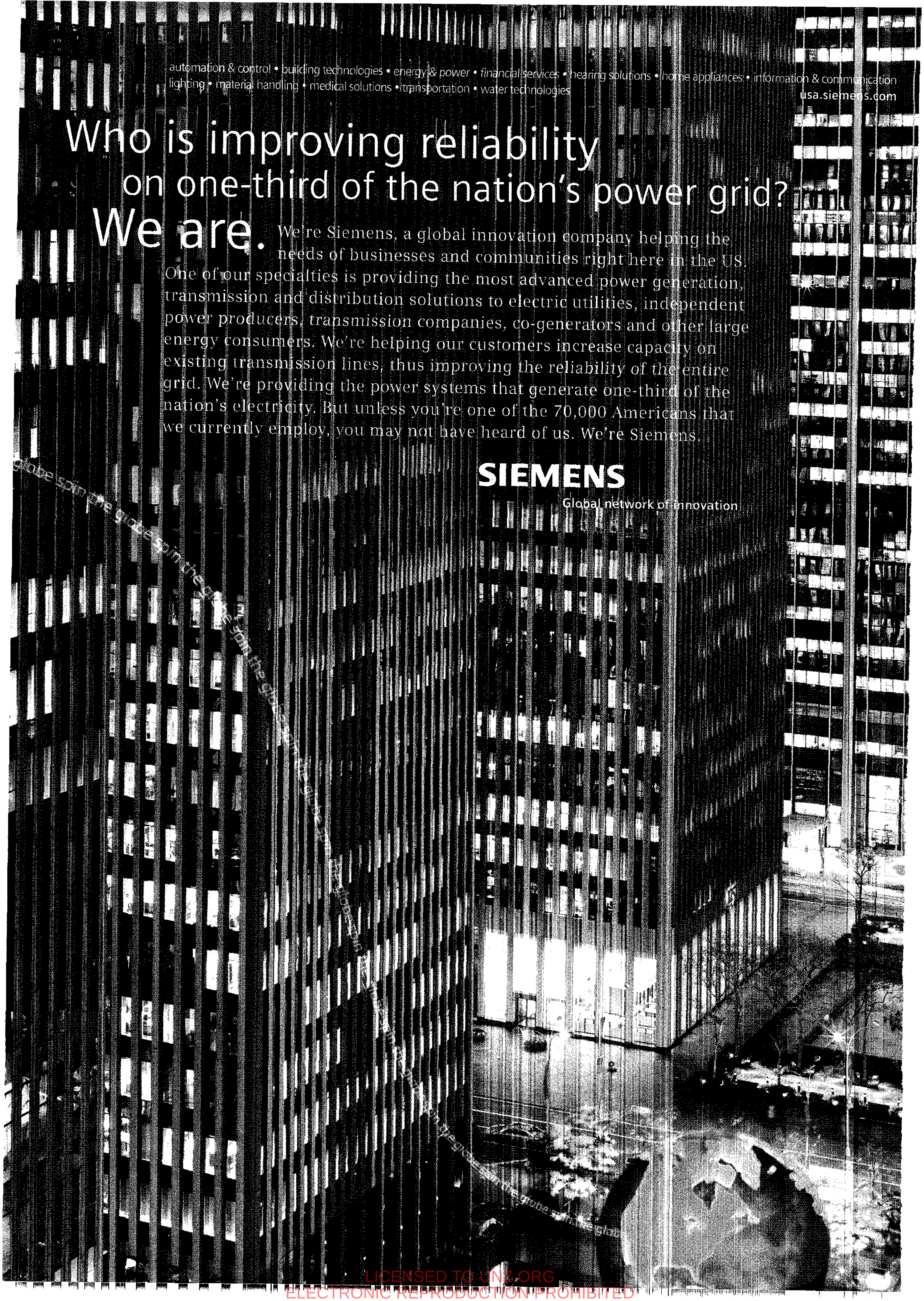




LINCOLN



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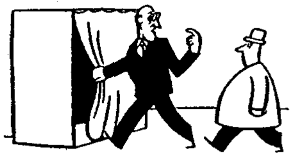
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
LANDMARKS

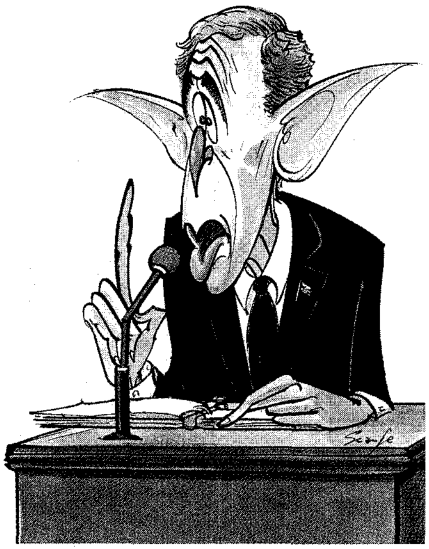


Last week, midway between Iraq's surprisingly successful Election Day and President Bush's State of the Union address—in which he asserted, not unreasonably, that the election proved that "the Iraqi people value their own liberty"—excerpts from a purported newspaper clipping began rocketing around cyberspace, from Web sites to inboxes to chatrooms and back around again. At first glance, the item looked like a bit of Internet apocrypha, but a visit to the microfilm reader proved it to be genuine.

> U.S. ENCOURAGED
> BY VIETNAM VOTE
>
> Officials Cite 83% Turnout
> Despite Vietcong Terror
>
> By PETER GROSE
> Special to The New York Times
>
> WASHINGTON, Sept. 3—United States officials were surprised and heartened today at the size of turnout in South Vietnam's presidential election despite a Vietcong terrorist campaign to disrupt the voting.
>
> According to reports from Saigon, 83 per cent of the 5.85 million registered voters cast their ballots yesterday. Many of them risked reprisals threatened by the Vietcong. . . .
>
> A successful election has long been seen as the keystone in President Johnson's policy of encouraging the growth of constitutional processes in South Vietnam.

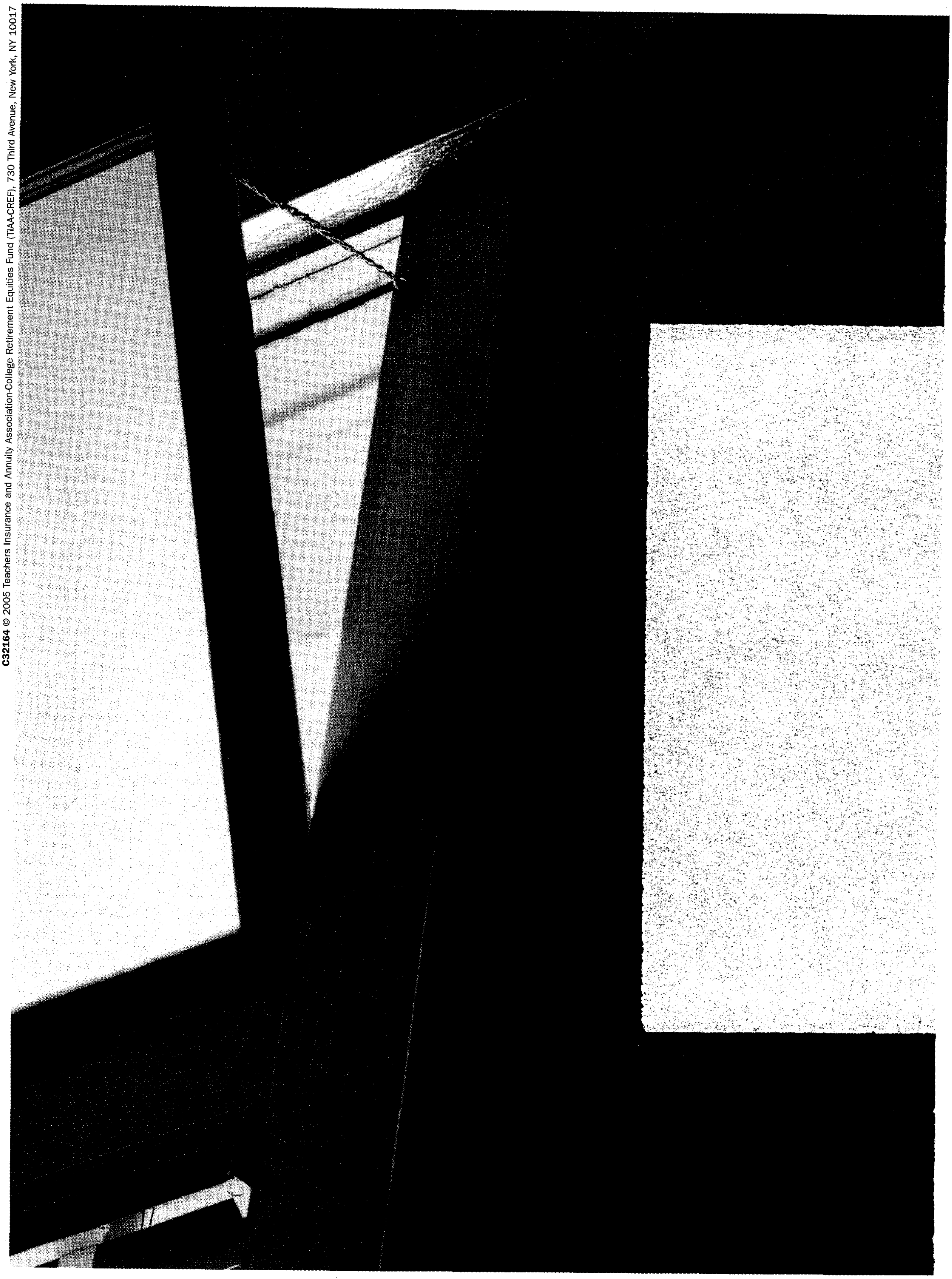
Most of those who passed around this scrap of 1967 historical flotsam probably meant it as no more than a prudent caution against irrational exuberance. ("A flawed analogy, but resonant all the same," was one correspondent's accompanying note.) For others, no doubt, it was a petulant denial that something good might actually have happened in Iraq on George W. Bush's watch. Either way, it wouldn't be the first time that "landmark events in the history of liberty," to borrow a trope from Bush's speech, have been greeted sourly in certain quarters back home.

"We must not be euphoric," a senior American official grumped in the autumn of 1989, as Europe was exploding with joy at the fall of the Berlin Wall. "We have to be a little reserved about formulating major policy shifts until we have an opportunity to see what happens," he muttered. "I'm as enthusiastic as anyone else, but behind what's left of the Wall, there are still three hundred and eighty thousand Soviet troops in East Germany," he groused. The senior official, who has since ascended to even more senior officialdom, was Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. Three years earlier, as a congressman, Cheney had been similarly churlish—and similarly blind to the power of the democratic spirit—when he voted against a resolution calling for the South African regime to release Nelson Mandela from prison and negotiate with the African National Congress, on the ground that Mandela and his organization were terrorists who would establish a Communist dictatorship.



Cheney was wrong about the durability of the Soviet bloc and wrong about the villainy of Nelson Mandela, and it may yet turn out that the clipping-clippers are wrong about the possibility of something like democracy in Iraq. No one knows. There are plenty of Vietnam echoes in America's Iraq adventure, especially in the corrosive effects on domestic comity, the use of false or distorted intelligence to create a sense of immediate threat, and the arrogance, combined with ignorance of local realities, of many senior strategists. But the differences are large, beginning with the nature of the enemy. The Vietnamese Communists possessed a legitimacy derived from thirty years of anticolonial struggle—against France, then Japan, then France again, and, finally, willy-nilly, the United States. Iraq's

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE



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insurgency has support in the Sunni minority, but it is no national liberation movement. And for all the cruelty of the Iraq war's "collateral damage," it has produced no equivalents of Vietnam's carpet bombings, free-fire zones, or strategic hamlets. (Nor, it must be said, did Vietnam produce an equivalent of Abu Ghraib; but then Vietnam was a war in which both sides held prisoners.)

Iraq is not Vietnam, and Iraq's election was not like Vietnam's in 1967. The latter was a winner-take-all presidential and vice-presidential "contest," staged on American orders. The predetermined winners were the military strongmen already in power, Generals Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky. The exercise was as meaningless as one of those plebiscites by which the cowed citizens of banana republics ratify whichever colonel or corporal has lately mounted a coup. The Iraq election was the real thing. Voters had a choice of a hundred and eleven party lists, ranging from Communists to theocrats to secularists. (The murderous "security situation" made personal campaigning next to impossible, but this was less important than one might think; there were some seventy-seven hundred candidates on the national lists, far too many for voters to keep track of, so the election was about political, religious, and ethnic identity, not about personalities.) Moreover, the voting was the first stage of a process that, if it goes as planned, will provide fairly strong incentives for consensus and disincentives for civil war. Once the votes are counted—a laborious process—the result will be an extremely diverse two-hundred-and-seventy-five-member assembly, which will choose a transitional government and write a constitution. Since the draft constitution can be vetoed by two-thirds of the voters in any three of Iraq's eighteen provinces—a provision which, though originally designed to protect the Kurds, could prove equally efficacious in protecting the Sunnis—the assembly will have every reason to design a mechanism that accommodates the interests of minorities.

Critics of the Bush Administration can take comfort in the fact that the apparent success of the Iraqi election can be celebrated without having to celebrate the supposed wisdom of the Administration. Like the Homeland Security Department and the 9/11 Commission, the Iraqi election was something Bush & Co. resisted and were finally maneuvered into accepting. It wasn't their idea; it was an Iraqi idea—specifically, the idea of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Shiism's most prominent cleric. In a way, it was a by-product of the same American ignorance and bungling that produced the unchallenged post-Saddam looting and the myriad mistakes of the Coalition Provisional Authority. But this time—for the first time—the bungling seems to have yielded something positive.

Iraq is still a very, very long way from democracy. And even if it gets there, the costs of the journey—the more than ten thousand (so far) American wounded and dead, the tens of thousands of Iraqi men, women, and children killed, the hundreds of billions of dollars diverted from other purposes, the lies, the distraction from and gratuitous extension of the "war on terror," the moral and political catastrophe of systematic torture, the draining of good will toward and sympathy for America—will not necessarily justify themselves. But, for the moment at least, one can marvel at the power of the democratic idea. It survived American slavery; it survived Stalinist coöptation (the "German Democratic Republic," and so on); it survived Cold War horrors like America's support of Spanish Falangism and Central American death squads. Perhaps it can even survive the fervent embrace of George W. Bush.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

STREET LIFE

TOO MUCH INFORMATION

New Yorkers returning home after the Republican Convention last summer were startled and alarmed by an inexplicable new sight: oversized street signs hanging above busy intersections all over town. It has been five months now, and regrettably, unlike the Republicans, the new signs apparently are not going to go back where they came from.

The signs, if you have somehow missed them, are long and green with big white letters, like a "THRU TRAFFIC" sign on the New Jersey Turnpike, and they loom ominously out over the intersections they superintend, suspended from the arms of traffic-light poles. They name the street that runs beneath them (and therefore, of course, announce to drivers the street they may want to turn onto), and they do this loudly and with unfortunate abbreviations. Over the intersection of Park Avenue and Eighty-sixth Street, for instance, there is now a long green sign proclaiming "Park Av," with no period. A couple of blocks east, it gets worse: the green sign rubbernecks its way out into the middle of the street and announces "3Av." This keeps up (2Av, 1Av) until 86St runs, at last, into East End Av.

The Department of Transportation will tell you that it started hanging the new signs a year ago, and that so far there are about a thousand of them (it has another fifteen hundred to go), and that they are going up at what the D.O.T. calls "major signalized intersections" around town. There are already three hundred and four of them in Manhattan, on the "crosstown corridors."

The new signs put you immediately in mind of those nightmarish car trips in Los Angeles, where you begin somewhere and, forty-five minutes later, you are somewhere else, and all the while you have been looking for a big sign that reads "Pico." Worse than merely unfamiliar, though, the signs are infuriating—first, because they are there for the convenience of cars, and thus violate the first Law of Civilization, which states that nothing must ever be done for the convenience of cars (the mark of a city worth living in is that there are never enough places to park); and, second, because they eclipse, as décor, the jaunty, jazz-era syncopation of the classic New York street-corner sign pair, each sign gesturing toward its own street, but with the two set at slightly different levels, so that they have a happy, semaphoric panache. (The two smaller signs are still there, but they are now drowned out by the highway signage, two jazz piccolos trying to be heard above an electrified kazoo.)

Let it be said that Iris Weinshall, the city's Commissioner of Transportation, speaks up eloquently and staunchly for the new signs: "They are there for all the multiple users in the city—for motor-

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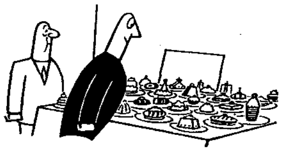
ists, for pedestrians, for people who ride on buses. Many people were finding it harder and harder to read those little old signs we have up. For those evil motorists some people don't like—now, at least, they have time to make decisions." She went on, "I like the way the signs look, but it's a safety issue first of all. The more information you give people, the less likely they are to make silly choices."

But how many silly (i.e., dangerous) choices were actually encouraged by the old signs? No one has ever bombed along Eighty-sixth Street in blind despair, unable to find Madison Avenue. The new signs signal a choice that is not so much silly as dispiriting. They do more than contribute to the ongoing homogenization, the Americanization, of New York. They imply that the homogenization has already taken place. The reason these kinds of signs are necessary at the intersections of Los Angeles boulevards is that all the avenues and streets there look more or less alike. In New York, each avenue should be, and is, instantly recognizable. Park Avenue looks like Park Avenue; Madison Avenue looks like Madison; Broadway looks like nothing on earth but Broadway. You see the street, and you make the turn. New York is not a hard place to get around in. If you don't know where you are, you don't deserve to be here.

—*Adam Gopnik*

OFF THE RUNWAY
LET THEM EAT CAKES



Ten years ago, Mrs. Corrine Barsky split her time between an apartment on Fifth Avenue, a house in Lawrence, Long Island, and a home in Boca Raton, but today she has just one residence, a duplex apartment on an upper floor of the Carlyle Hotel. She has owned the apartment for two years—for the previous eight years she lived in a suite on a lower floor formerly occupied by Jacqueline Onassis—and has put her own stamp on the place, with a bold mixture of animal prints and chinoiserie in the living room and romantic French antiques in the bedroom.

Mrs. Barsky moved to the hotel when she became a widow; her late husband, Arnold Barsky, was the founder and president of a company called Arcon Coating Mills, and had made his fortune in yellow legal pads. "Forty or fifty years ago, at the top of the legal pads there was just cloth," Mrs. Barsky explained the other day. "He thought, What is that? It is ridiculous. It comes apart. He saw a need, and so he designed a special tape that goes across the top of the legal pad." Mr. Barsky also produced the blank sheets of paper found at the front and back of books. "Without the end sheets, the book would not be held together properly and would fall apart," Mrs. Barsky said. The Barskys were married for thirty-nine years; their one child, a daughter, was married last June in a ceremony at the Jewish Museum, on whose board Mrs. Barsky sits.

Living in a hotel, Mrs. Barsky has found, suits her needs very well. "It's like a dream," she said. "Twenty-four-hour maid service, my dear. They take care of everything. You call downstairs and ask, Can you change a light bulb? Can you open a box for me? They come up. You need a cup of coffee, they bring you a cup of coffee within minutes. And the people that stay here—you never know if you are going to run into Nicole Kidman in the exercise room. You're part of a family. It's not like that in a co-op building."

The other day, the Carlyle's managing director, James McBride, invited Mrs. Barsky to an event that was taking place in the hotel's Dumonet restaurant: an afternoon tea to celebrate New York Fashion Week, with petits fours and cakes inspired by items from the spring fashion collections. The idea for Prêt-à-Portea, as the event was called, was imported from the Berkeley Hotel in London, which has held similar teas for the past two seasons. Also imported for the week was the Berkeley's pastry chef, Angela Esparza, whose job it was to translate articles of designer clothing, selected by the Carlyle's fashion advisory board—Kelly Killoren Bensimon, an author and former model, Emily Holt, a fashion editor, and Candy Pratts Price, the executive fashion director of Style.com—into confectionery.

Some of her creations were relatively straightforward, such as a pinkish iced cookie in the shape of a woman's torso decorated with white checkered icing, to represent a Burberry bikini. Others were more interpretive, including a chocolate-mousse-filled profiterole marked with yellow and brown swirls, to represent the tiger prints favored by Michael Kors, and a shot glass filled with coconut panna cotta and topped with a strand of spun sugar, to represent a frilly white gown by Ungaro. A stubby éclair, topped with zigzags of icing in green, blue, and mauve, was supposed to represent a fabric design by Zac Posen.

Mrs. Barsky's own outfit, a navy-blue Carolina Herrera pants suit, a black quilted Chanel handbag, and black Chanel pumps, was not represented on the Carlyle's cake plates—which, she pointed out, were typically outfitted quite differently at teatime. "I don't see any scones," she said, with a raised eyebrow. "I don't see any jelly and cream." Mrs. Barsky and her gentleman companion skipped tea, though they did sit down in the restaurant's Gallery café for an early supper before heading out for a concert by the Collegiate Chorale, of which Mrs. Barsky is a board member. A plate of the fashion petits fours accompanied Mrs. Barsky's postprandial iced cappuccino.

Mrs. Barsky's friend, a gray-haired man who helps run a company that imports handbags from China, surveyed a bright-pink Hermès Kelly-bag cake with a professional eye. "It has an Hermès look to it," he granted. "I'm going to bite into it now, if you don't mind." He bit. "The outside is better than the inside," he said. Mrs. Barsky ate a spoonful of the Ungaro panna cotta, and wrinkled her nose. "This is fair, but I am not going to waste my calories," she said, and had a spoonful of a Pucci-patterned napoleon instead. "This is not particularly excellent," she said.

Behind the table, the couple held hands. They met four or five years ago at an ice-cream parlor on Madison Avenue. "He asked me where I lived, and I said, 'On the street,' " Mrs. Barsky said. "I'm going to tell you where I live? I don't even know you." Now they regularly occupy the same banquette in the corner by the door. "I always sit at this table," Mrs. Barsky said, with satisfaction. "After twenty-five years, they put up a plaque on the wall with your name on it. I've got fifteen years to go."

—*Rebecca Mead*

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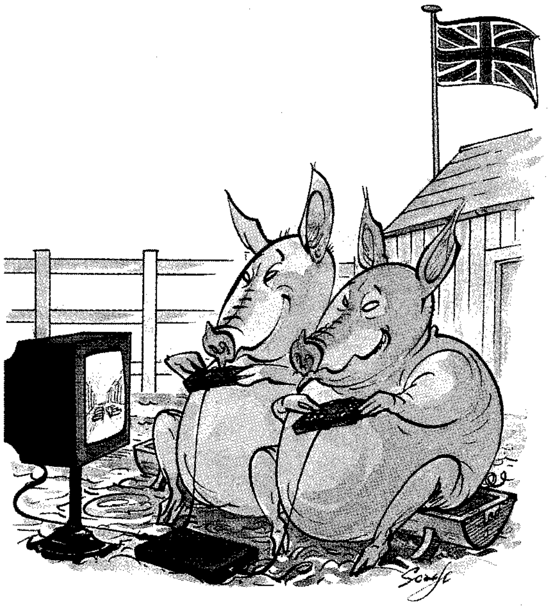
PIGS MUST PLAY

Most Americans know nothing of the location, composition, or purpose of the European Union. There is no shame in such ignorance, for most Europeans are in the same position—rather worse, indeed, given that they are the ones who are meant to be experiencing a pleasant sensation of unity. If anything, the view from the States is more precise: Europe is that Shrek-shaped landmass to the left of the Middle East, and the European Union, or E.U., must therefore be the constitutional equivalent of a group hug, designed to insure that no Finn, say, will ever launch a first-strike attack on a Greek. Europeans themselves, however, cannot even decide where Europe begins and ends. Does it include Turkey, which has taken the first step toward joining the E.U. in 2015? Does it even include Great Britain, a founding member? To most Englishmen, the geography is unambiguous: Europe is what you get if you are stupid enough to venture any farther than Kent.



Hence the recent British opinion poll suggesting that, were the Government to hold a referendum on whether the country should sign on to the European Constitution, the percentage of the population in favor would be a slightly unencouraging twenty-four. Nobody but the Prime Minister knows what the Constitution looks like, or even whether it is a physical document, a lovely idea, or a bill of health, but voters nonetheless felt morally impelled to state that, whatever it is, they don't like it.

In this regard, as in all others, the British press remains warmly on the side of the people. Editors fear, however, that if the E.U. retains its current air of overwhelming vagueness it might just bore the people into submission; the people must therefore be frightened into active resistance by facts, the more concrete and disgraceful the better. Two years ago, for instance, readers of the London *Times* were jolted by the revelation that "farmers throughout the country have 90 days to put a toy in every pigsty or face up to three months in jail. The new ruling from Brussels"—the lair of Lucifer, in the eyes of the *Times*—"is to keep pigs happy and prevent them chewing each other."

In an effort to fend off such murky accusations, the E.U. has set up a page on its Web site. Entitled "Get Your Facts Straight," it is split into two parts. Under the heading "The Press," it quotes a number of the more alarming media reports on E.U. activities. Under "The Facts," it takes each report and serves up the sober and appropriate truths, with a view to allaying that alarm. Many areas are covered—the harmonization of corporate income tax, the question of whether "EU regulations mean the end of bendy bananas," the nicely restrained rumor that users of the new European currency "could see their hands turn into a scaly, diseased mass after minutes," in the words of the *Observer*—but no question is addressed more searchingly than that of leisure facilities for the modern hog. The site clarifies the E.U. position. "Pigs," we are informed, "must have permanent access to a sufficient quantity of material to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities." Close your eyes, and you could be back at the trial of Oliver North.

Nobody could doubt the stoutness of the rebuttal: "There is categorically no mention of toys anywhere in the legislation." But what has the E.U. gained from this denial? Does it not risk a humorless self-defeat? In short, what is wrong with a pig's having something to play with? The porcine life is a monotonous business, and it seldom ends well; who is to say that it would not be enhanced by an Xbox? Instead of lying there in the straw, twitching with B.L.T. dreams, the Babes of Europe could sit up and improve their skills at Grand Theft Auto or Mini Golf Master 2. Older sows might welcome a game of Travel Scrabble. Even the humble yo-yo would be a plus.

So, come on, Eurocrats. Drop the fussy corrections. Stand up and be proud of your directives. So what if the *Daily Mail* insists that King Charles spaniels might be banned under E.U. law? Their nerves are shot anyway. Ship 'em on out. The *Daily Telegraph* may have professed shock at the thought that "officials at the European Commission are preparing to ban yogurt from Britain," but, even if it were true (which it isn't), it would hardly be a calamity. And, as for that Russian tightrope walker who was reportedly told to put on a hard hat (the "Working at Height" directive), did anybody stop to check his breath?

Much speculation surrounds the future of the E.U.—how many extra members it can support, and whether its goal is, as opponents claim, the forging of a European superstate. Yet these are trifles compared with the ambitions that are made manifest on its Web site. On bananas: "The diameter of the fruit is a way of measuring its maturity/development." On cucumbers: "Cucumbers do not have to be straight." On an unrelated matter, the *Sun* may claim that "red-faced women will have to hand in their clapped-out sex toys under a new E.U. law" (how does one actually clap them out?), but if that is one side effect of the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment directive, due to take effect on August 13th, so be it. The history of European civilization has been rife with attrition and dispute, but the age of conflict is over. Americans do not want to tour a landscape littered with exhausted sex toys. They do not want to bandage the broken heads of circus performers. They want to walk the streets without fear of yogurt; they want to consume bananas of enormous and unembarrassed girth; above all, they want to sit and watch contented pigs toss a Frisbee from sty to sty. Is that really too much to ask?

—*Anthony Lane*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE CUSTOMER IS KING

Over the years, Wal-Mart has been given credit or blame for many things: the productivity boom of the late nineties, the destruction of American downtowns, the migration of jobs to China, the popularity of Toby Keith. Now, according to the financial press, it's responsible for one of the most important mergers in business history, Procter & Gamble's fifty-seven-billion-dollar acquisition of Gillette. As the pundits tell it, the companies did the deal in order to create a manufacturing giant with enough bargaining clout to stand up to Wal-Mart.

The story goes something like this: once upon a time, companies that made things had the whip hand in the American economy. They could charge premium prices for their goods, and raise prices when costs went up, without losing their customers. In other words, they had pricing power. But in recent decades the rise of retailers like Wal-Mart and Target has changed all that. Today, the companies that sell things dictate the terms. The P. & G.-Gillette deal, in this rendering, is an attempt by a pair of manufacturers to take back a little of the power that they've lost.

It's certainly true that manufacturers have a lot less pull in the marketplace than they used to. But they haven't lost it to Wal-Mart and Target. They've lost it to you and me. The real transformation of the past thirty years is the rise not of the American retailer but of the American consumer. That's why Wal-Mart is so tough to negotiate with, and so relentless in its quest for lower prices and lower costs. American consumers now consider it their due to have access to a wide variety of cheap, reliable goods. Their allegiances are fickle; brand loyalty is in fast decline. Wal-Mart is often spoken of as the most powerful company in the world, but it earns less than four cents on every dollar of sales, and its profit margins have stayed roughly the same year after year—which means that when it cuts costs with suppliers it passes along those savings to the customers, instead of padding its own bottom line. Wal-Mart can't charge more; if it does, its customers will go elsewhere. The same is true of Target and Costco. In a sense, Wal-Mart is the elected representative of tens of millions of hard-bargaining shoppers, and, like any representative, it serves only at their pleasure.

Several developments in the past three decades have combined to increase consumer clout. The Federal Reserve's war on inflation got people accustomed to stable prices. Laws changed—until the seventies, it was actually illegal in many states to sell goods for less than the manufacturer's suggested price. A sharp rise in the quality of most products narrowed the difference between big brands and upstarts, and an influx of foreign products dramatically increased competition. Finally, the explosion in information available to shoppers—from *Consumer Reports*, in the beginning, to the Internet today—made it much harder for manufacturers to get away with selling junk.

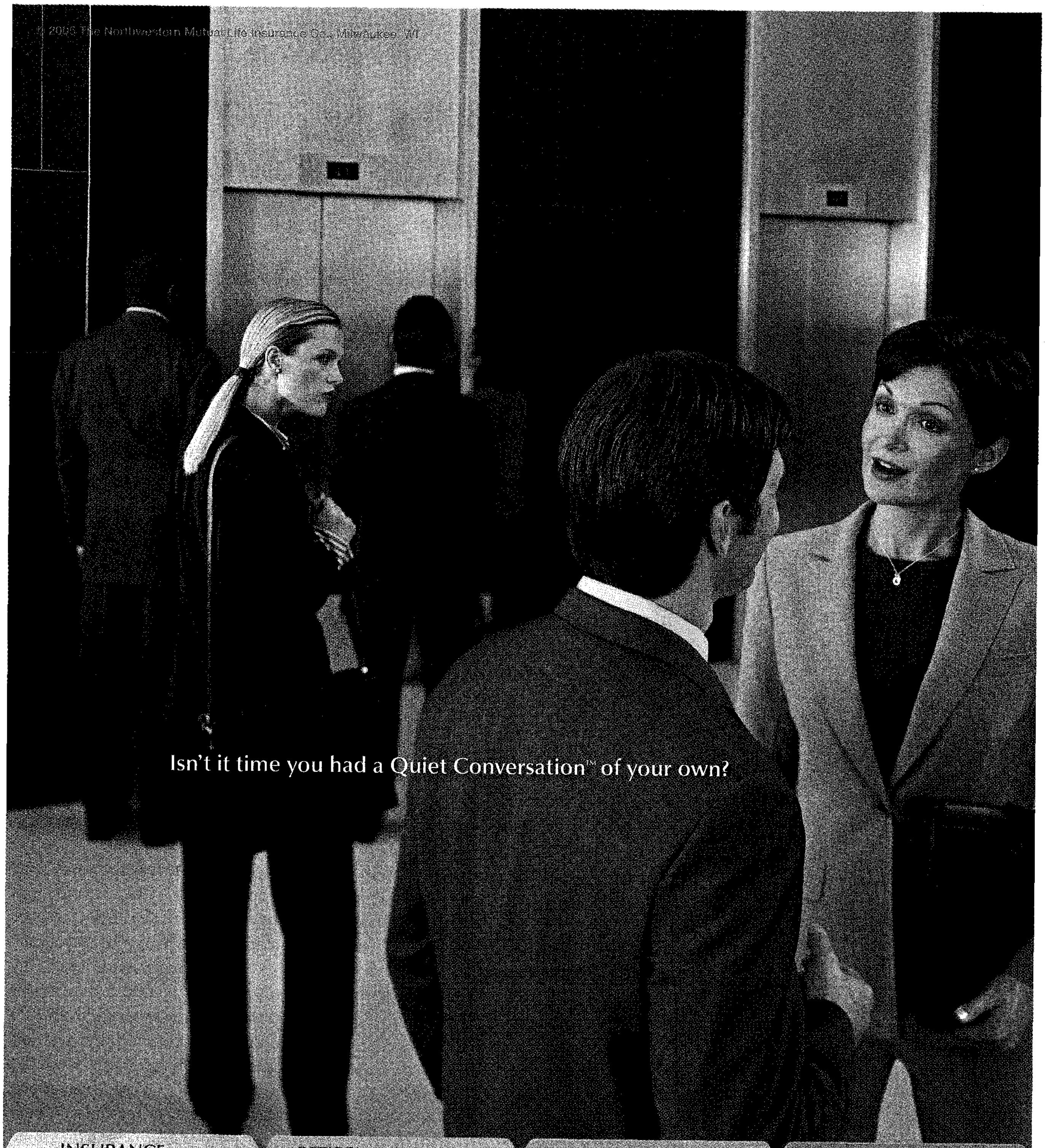
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Wal-Mart and other superstores contributed to the trend. They undercut their competitors, and forced the rest of the world to adapt. But now Wal-Mart is stuck; it has no choice but to keep selling things cheap. That's what it does. Which means Procter & Gamble—even super-sized—is stuck, too. Few products are irreplaceable. So-called private-label products—the kind that, in the tradition of generics, are hardly advertised or marketed—are now big sellers at many stores. Ol' Roy dog food, Wal-Mart's house brand, is the best-selling dog food in the country. CyberHome, which makes DVD players for companies like Radio Shack, sold more of them last year than Sony. It's getting harder and harder for manufacturers to charge premium prices for so-called premium brands. Of course, this is how it should be, according to the economics textbooks. In a genuinely competitive economy, the company that ends up selling a good is going to be the one that produces (and therefore sells) it at the lowest cost. This is a case where, as the Princeton economist Alan Blinder put it, "the economy came to resemble the model."

The people who run Procter & Gamble (and Gillette) seem to understand this. A. G. Lafley, the C.E.O. of Procter & Gamble, denied that the acquisition had anything to do with the power of Wal-Mart. When he was pressed, he said, "The power has shifted to the consumer." This may not be mere talk. In a world where brand names alone don't confer power, the only way to prosper is to make products that genuinely improve (even if only marginally) on what came before. This is exactly what Gillette and P. & G. have done. Gillette's razor line is one of the most lucrative businesses in history, mainly because the company has invested billions in technological innovation. This has allowed it to introduce a new razor every few years that costs considerably more than the one it's replacing. And while historically P. & G. has focussed more on brand-building and marketing, in recent years it has invested heavily in innovation, too. The Swiffer mop and the SpinBrush electric toothbrush may not quite rank up there with penicillin or the Model T, but in the world of consumer products they count as real breakthroughs.

The P. & G.-Gillette deal, then, is about quality, not clout. It will work if, as Lafley promises, it makes the two companies do better what they already do well; that is, make people cleaner and neater, at prices they can bear. All the talk of muscling Wal-Mart is an anachronism, a legacy of an outmoded way of selling things. P. & G. and Gillette may propose, but the consumer disposes.

—*James Surowiecki*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ANNALS OF JUSTICE

OUTSOURCING TORTURE

The secret history of America's "extraordinary rendition" program.

BY JANE MAYER

On January 27th, President Bush, in an interview with the *Times*, assured the world that "torture is never acceptable, nor do we hand over people to countries that do torture." Maher Arar, a Canadian engineer who was born in Syria, was surprised to learn of Bush's statement. Two and a half years ago, American officials, suspecting Arar of being a terrorist, apprehended him in New York and sent him back to Syria, where he endured months of brutal interrogation, including torture. When Arar described his experience in a phone interview recently, he invoked an Arabic expression. The pain was so unbearable, he said, that "you forget the milk that you have been fed from the breast of your mother."

Arar, a thirty-four-year-old graduate of McGill University whose family emigrated to Canada when he was a teen-ager, was arrested on September 26, 2002, at John F. Kennedy Airport. He was changing planes; he had been on vacation with his family in Tunisia, and was returning to Canada. Arar was detained because his name had been placed on the United States Watch List of terrorist suspects. He was held for the next thirteen days, as American officials questioned him about possible links to another suspected terrorist. Arar said that he barely knew the suspect, although he had worked with the man's brother. Arar, who was not formally charged, was placed in handcuffs and leg irons by plainclothes officials and transferred to an executive jet. The plane flew to Washington, continued to Portland, Maine, stopped in Rome, Italy, then landed in Amman, Jordan.

During the flight, Arar said, he heard the pilots and crew identify themselves in radio communications as members of "the Special Removal Unit." The Americans, he learned, planned to take him next to Syria. Having been told by his parents about the barbaric practices of the police in Syria, Arar begged crew members not to send him there, arguing that he would surely be tortured. His captors did not respond to his request; instead, they invited him to watch a spy thriller that was aired on board.

Ten hours after landing in Jordan, Arar said, he was driven to Syria, where interrogators, after a day of threats, "just began beating on me." They whipped his hands repeatedly with two-inch-thick electrical cables, and kept him in a windowless underground cell that he likened to a grave. "Not even animals could withstand it," he said. Although he initially tried to assert his innocence, he eventually confessed to anything his tormentors wanted him to say. "You just give up," he said. "You become like an animal."

A year later, in October, 2003, Arar was released without charges, after the Canadian government took up his cause. Imad Moustapha, the Syrian Ambassador in Washington, announced that his country had found no links between Arar and terrorism. Arar, it turned out, had been sent to Syria on orders from the U.S. government, under a secretive program known as "extraordinary rendition." This program had been devised as a means of extraditing terrorism suspects from one foreign state to another for interrogation and prosecution. Critics contend that the unstated purpose of such renditions is to subject the suspects to aggressive methods of persuasion that are illegal in America—including torture.

Arar is suing the U.S. government for his mistreatment. "They are outsourcing torture because they know it's illegal," he said. "Why, if they have suspicions, don't they question people within the boundary of the law?"

Rendition was originally carried out on a limited basis, but after September 11th, when President Bush declared a global war on terrorism, the program expanded beyond recognition—becoming, according to a former C.I.A. official, "an abomination." What began as a program aimed at a small, discrete set of suspects—people against whom there were outstanding foreign arrest warrants—came to include a wide and ill-defined population that the Administration terms "illegal enemy combatants." Many of them have never been publicly charged with any crime. Scott Horton, an expert on international law who helped prepare a report on renditions issued by N.Y.U. Law School and the New York City Bar Association, estimates that a hundred and fifty people have been rendered since 2001. Representative Ed Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts and a member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, said that a more precise number was impossible to obtain. "I've asked people at the C.I.A. for numbers," he said. "They refuse to answer. All they will say is that they're in compliance with the law."

Although the full scope of the extraordinary-rendition program isn't known, several recent cases have come to light that may well violate U.S. law. In 1998, Congress passed legislation declaring that it is "the policy of the United States not to expel, extradite, or otherwise effect the involuntary return of any person to a country in which there are substantial grounds for believing the person would be in danger of being subjected to torture, regardless of whether the person is physically present in the United States."

The Bush Administration, however, has argued that the threat posed by stateless terrorists who draw no distinction between military and civilian targets is so dire that it requires tough new rules of engagement. This shift in perspective, labelled the New Paradigm in a memo written by Alberto Gonzales, then the White House counsel, "places a high premium on . . . the ability to quickly obtain information from captured terrorists and their sponsors in order to avoid further atrocities against American civilians," giving less weight to the rights of suspects. It also questions many international laws of war. Five days after Al Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Vice-President Dick Cheney, reflecting the new outlook, argued, on "Meet the Press," that the government needed to "work through, sort of, the dark side." Cheney went on, "A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we're going to be successful. That's the world these folks operate in. And so it's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective."

The extraordinary-rendition program bears little relation to the system of due process afforded suspects in crimes in America. Terrorism suspects in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have often been abducted by hooded or masked American agents, then forced onto a Gulfstream V jet, like the one described by Arar. This jet, which has been registered to a series of dummy American corporations, such as Bayard Foreign Marketing, of Portland, Oregon, has clearance to land at U.S. military bases. Upon arriving in foreign countries, rendered suspects often vanish. Detainees are not provided with lawyers, and many families are not informed of their whereabouts.

The most common destinations for rendered suspects are Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and Jordan, all of which have been cited for human-rights violations by the State Department, and are known to torture suspects. To justify sending detainees to these countries, the Administration appears to be relying on a very fine reading of an imprecise clause in the United Nations Convention Against Torture

Among the critics of the Administration's legal measures is a counter-terrorism expert who helped establish the "rendition" program.

JOHN RITTER

(which the U.S. ratified in 1994), requiring "substantial grounds for believing" that a detainee will be tortured abroad. Martin Lederman, a lawyer who left the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel in 2002, after eight years, says, "The Convention only applies when you know a suspect is more likely than not to be tortured, but what if you kind of know? That's not enough. So there are ways to get around it."

Administration officials declined to discuss the rendition program. But Rohan Gunaratna, a Sri Lankan expert on terrorist interrogations who has consulted with several intelligence agencies, argued that rough tactics "can save hundreds of lives." He said, "When you capture a terrorist, he may know when the next operation will be staged, so it may be necessary to put a detainee under physical or psychological pressure. I disagree with physical torture, but sometimes the threat of it must be used."

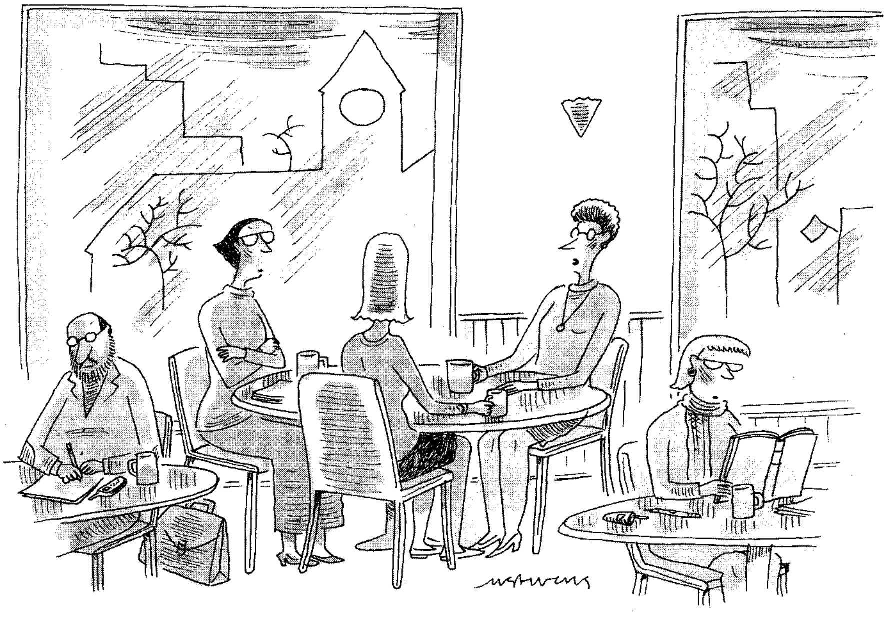
Rendition is just one element of the Administration's New Paradigm. The C.I.A. itself is holding dozens of "high value" terrorist suspects outside of the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., in addition to the estimated five hundred and fifty detainees in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The Administration confirmed the identities of at least ten of these suspects to the 9/11 Commission—including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a top Al Qaeda operative, and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a chief planner of the September 11th attacks—but refused to allow commission members to interview the men, and would not say where they were being held. Reports have suggested that C.I.A. prisons are being operated in Thailand, Qatar, and Afghanistan, among other countries. At the request of the C.I.A., Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld personally ordered that a prisoner in Iraq be hidden from Red Cross officials for several months, and Army General Paul Kern told Congress that the C.I.A. may have hidden up to a hundred detainees. The Geneva Conventions of 1949, which established norms on the treatment of soldiers and civilians captured in war, require the prompt registration of detainees, so that their treatment can be monitored, but the Administration argues that Al Qaeda members and supporters, who are not part of a state-sponsored military, are not covered by the Conventions.

The Bush Administration's departure from international norms has been justified in intellectual terms by élite lawyers like Gonzales, who is a graduate of Harvard Law School. Gonzales, the new Attorney General, argued during his confirmation proceedings that the U.N. Convention Against Torture's ban on "cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment" of terrorist suspects does not apply to American interrogations of foreigners overseas. Perhaps surprisingly, the fiercest internal resistance to this thinking has come from people who have been directly involved in interrogation, including veteran F.B.I. and C.I.A. agents. Their concerns are as much practical as ideological. Years of experience in interrogation have led them to doubt the effectiveness of physical coercion as a means of extracting reliable information. They also warn that the Bush Administration, having taken so many prisoners outside the realm of the law, may not be able to bring them back in. By holding detainees indefinitely, without counsel, without charges of wrongdoing, and under circumstances that could, in legal parlance, "shock the conscience" of a court, the Administration has jeopardized its chances of convicting hundreds of suspected terrorists, or even of using them as witnesses in almost any court in the world.

"It's a big problem," Jamie Gorelick, a former deputy attorney general and a member of the 9/11 Commission, says. "In criminal justice, you either prosecute the suspects or let them go. But if you've treated them in ways that won't *allow* you to prosecute them you're in this no man's land. What do you do with these people?"

The criminal prosecution of terrorist suspects has not been a priority for the Bush Administration, which has focussed, rather, on preventing additional attacks. But some people who have been fighting terrorism for many years are concerned about unintended consequences of the Administration's radical legal measures. Among these critics is Michael Scheuer, a former C.I.A. counter-terrorism expert who helped establish the practice of rendition. Scheuer left the agency in 2004, and has written two acerbic critiques of the government's fight against Islamic terrorism under the pseudonym Anonymous, the most recent of which, "Imperial Hubris," was a best-seller.

Not long ago, Scheuer, who lives in northern Virginia, spoke openly for the first time about how he and several other top C.I.A. officials set up the program, in the mid-nineties. "It was begun in desperation, " he told me. At the time, he was the head of the C.I.A.'s Islamic-militant unit, whose job was to "detect, disrupt, and dismantle" terrorist operations. His unit spent much of 1996 studying how Al Qaeda operated; by the next year, Scheuer said, its mission was to try



"I hear we're all getting valentines from Lawrence Summers."

to capture bin Laden and his associates. He recalled, "We went to the White House"—which was then occupied by the Clinton Administration—"and they said, 'Do it.' " He added that Richard Clarke, who was in charge of counterterrorism for the National Security Council, offered no advice. "He told me, 'Figure it out by yourselves,' " Scheuer said. (Clarke did not respond to a request for comment.)

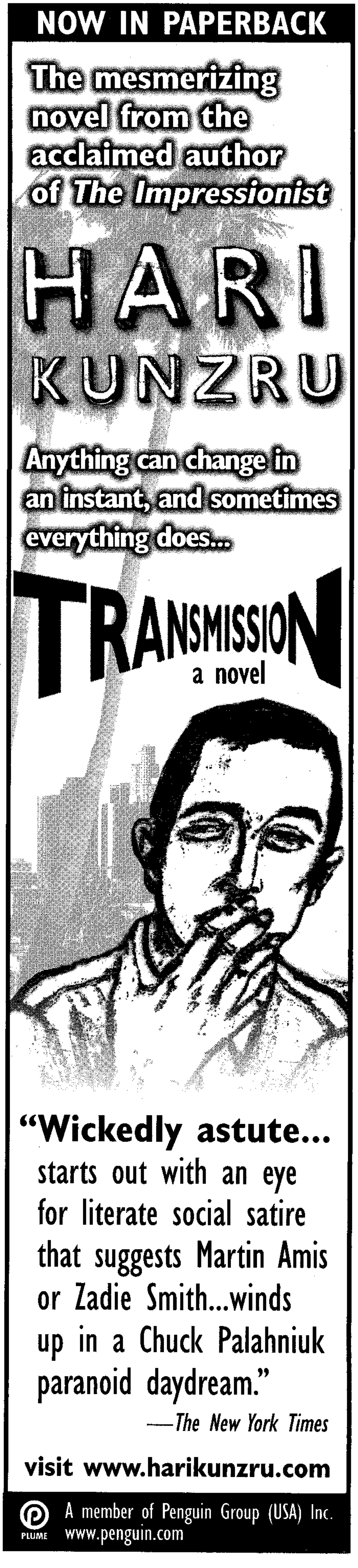
Scheuer sought the counsel of Mary Jo White, the former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, who, along with a small group of F.B.I. agents, was pursuing the 1993 World Trade Center bombing case. In 1998, White's team obtained an indictment against bin Laden, authorizing U.S. agents to bring him and his associates to the United States to stand trial. From the start, though, the C.I.A. was wary of granting terrorism suspects the due process afforded by American law. The agency did not want to divulge secrets about its intelligence sources and methods, and American courts demand transparency. Even establishing the chain of custody of key evidence—such as a laptop computer—could easily pose a significant problem: foreign governments might refuse to testify in U.S. courts about how they had obtained the evidence, for fear of having their secret coöperation exposed. (Foreign governments often worried about retaliation from their own Muslim populations.) The C.I.A. also felt that other agencies sometimes stood in its way. In 1996, for example, the State Department stymied a joint effort by the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. to question one of bin Laden's cousins in America, because he had a diplomatic passport, which protects the holder from U.S. law enforcement. Describing the C.I.A.'s frustration, Scheuer said, "We were turning into voyeurs. We knew where these people were, but we couldn't capture them because we had nowhere to take them." The agency realized that "we had to come up with a third party."

The obvious choice, Scheuer said, was Egypt. The largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid after Israel, Egypt was a key strategic ally, and its secret police force, the Mukhabarat, had a reputation for brutality. Egypt had been frequently cited by the State Department for torture of prisoners. According to a 2002 report, detainees were "stripped and blindfolded; suspended from a ceiling or doorframe with feet just touching the floor; beaten with fists, whips, metal rods, or other objects; subjected to electrical shocks; and doused with cold water [and] sexually assaulted." Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's leader, who came to office in 1981, after President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by Islamist extremists, was determined to crack down on terrorism. His prime political enemies were radical Islamists, hundreds of whom had fled the country and joined Al Qaeda. Among these was Ayman al-Zawahiri, a physician from Cairo, who went to Afghanistan and eventually became bin Laden's deputy.

In 1995, Scheuer said, American agents proposed the rendition program to Egypt, making clear that it had the resources to track, capture, and transport terrorist suspects globally—including access to a small fleet of aircraft. Egypt embraced the idea. "What was clever was that some of the senior people in Al Qaeda were Egyptian," Scheuer said. "It served American purposes to get these people arrested, and Egyptian purposes to get these people back, where they could be interrogated." Technically, U.S. law requires the C.I.A. to seek "assurances" from foreign governments that rendered suspects won't be tortured. Scheuer told me that this was done, but he was "not sure" if any documents confirming the arrangement were signed.

A series of spectacular covert operations followed from this secret pact. On September 13, 1995, U.S. agents helped kidnap Talaat Fouad Qassem, one of Egypt's most wanted terrorists, in Croatia. Qassem had fled to Europe after being linked by Egypt to the assassination of Sadat; he had been sentenced to death in absentia. Croatian police seized Qassem in Zagreb and handed him over to U.S. agents, who interrogated him aboard a ship cruising the Adriatic Sea and then took him back to Egypt. Once there, Qassem disappeared. There is no record that he was put on trial. Hossam el-Hamalawy, an Egyptian journalist who covers human-rights issues, said, "We believe he was executed."

A more elaborate operation was staged in Tirana, Albania, in the summer of 1998. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the C.I.A. provided the Albanian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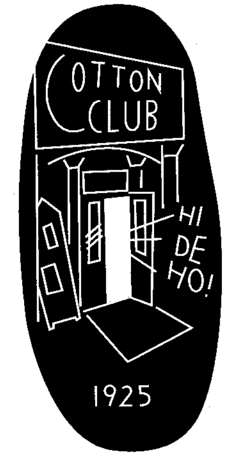
intelligence service with equipment to wiretap the phones of suspected Muslim militants. Tapes of the conversations were translated into English, and U.S. agents discovered that they contained lengthy discussions with Zawahiri, bin Laden's deputy. The U.S. pressured Egypt for assistance; in June, Egypt issued an arrest warrant for Shawki Salama Attiya, one of the militants. Over the next few months, according to the *Journal*, Albanian security forces, working with U.S. agents, killed one suspect and captured Attiya and four others. These men were bound, blindfolded, and taken to an abandoned airbase, then flown by jet to Cairo for interrogation. Attiya later alleged that he suffered electrical shocks to his genitals, was hung from his limbs, and was kept in a cell in filthy water up to his knees. Two other suspects, who had been sentenced to death in absentia, were hanged.



On August 5, 1998, an Arab-language newspaper in London published a letter from the International Islamic Front for Jihad, in which it threatened retaliation against the U.S. for the Albanian operation—in a "language they will understand." Two days later, the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were blown up, killing two hundred and twenty-four people.

The U.S. began rendering terror suspects to other countries, but the most common destination remained Egypt. The partnership between the American and the Egyptian intelligence services was extraordinarily close: the Americans could give the Egyptian interrogators questions they wanted put to the detainees in the morning, Scheuer said, and get answers by the evening. The Americans asked to question suspects directly themselves, but, Scheuer said, the Egyptians refused. "We were never in the same room at the same time."

Scheuer claimed that "there was a legal process" undergirding these early renditions. Every suspect who was apprehended, he said, had been convicted in absentia. Before a suspect was captured, a dossier was prepared containing the equivalent of a rap sheet. The C.I.A.'s legal counsel signed off on every proposed operation. Scheuer said that this system prevented innocent people from being subjected to rendition. "Langley would never let us proceed unless there was substance," he said. Moreover, Scheuer emphasized, renditions were pursued out of expedience—"not out of thinking it was the best policy."

Since September 11th, as the number of renditions has grown, and hundreds of terrorist suspects have been deposited indefinitely in places like Guantánamo Bay, the shortcomings of this approach have become manifest. "Are we going to hold these people forever?" Scheuer asked. "The policymakers hadn't thought what to do with them, and what would happen when it was found out that we were turning them over to governments that the human-rights world reviled." Once a detainee's rights have been violated, he says, "you absolutely can't" reinstate him into the court system. "You can't kill him, either," he added. "All we've done is create a nightmare."

On a bleak winter day in Trenton, New Jersey, Dan Coleman, an ex-F.B.I. agent who retired last July, because of asthma, scoffed at the idea that a C.I.A. agent was now having compunctions about renditions. The C.I.A., Coleman said, liked rendition from the start. "They loved that these guys would just disappear off the books, and never be heard of again," he said. "They were proud of it."

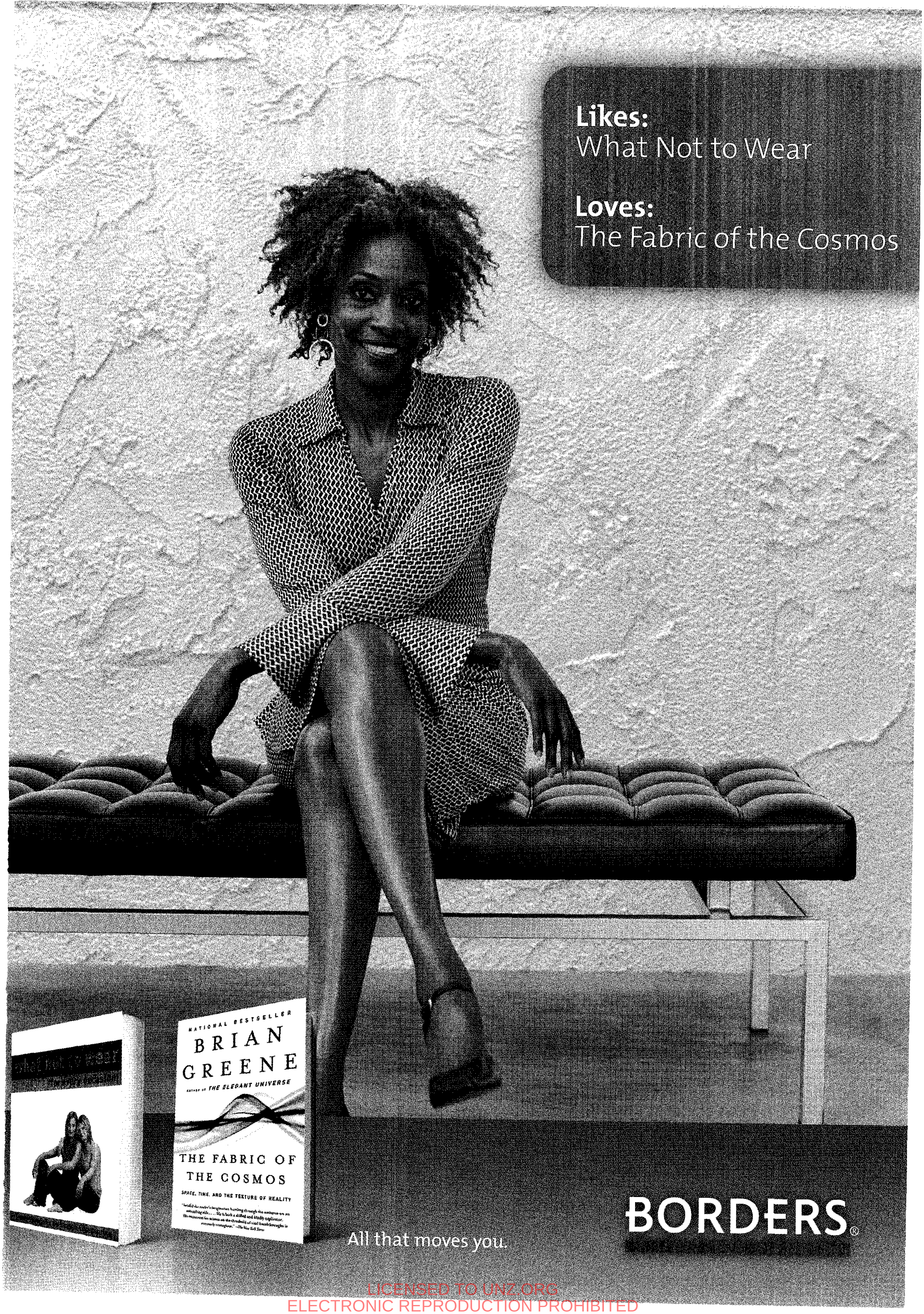
For ten years, Coleman worked closely with the C.I.A. on counter-terrorism cases, including the Embassy attacks in Kenya and Tanzania. His methodical style of detective work, in which interrogations were aimed at forging relationships with detainees, became unfashionable after September 11th, in part because the government was intent on extracting information as quickly as possible, in order to prevent future attacks. Yet the more patient approach used by Coleman and other agents had yielded major successes. In the Embassy-bombings case, they helped convict four Al Qaeda operatives on three hundred and two criminal counts; all four men pleaded guilty to serious terrorism charges. The confessions the F.B.I. agents elicited, and the trial itself, which ended in May, 2001, created an invaluable public record about Al Qaeda, including details about its funding mechanisms, its internal structure, and its intention to obtain weapons of mass destruction. (The political leadership in Washington, unfortunately, did not pay sufficient attention.)

Coleman is a political nonpartisan with a law-and-order mentality. His eldest son is a former Army Ranger who served in Afghanistan. Yet Coleman was troubled by the Bush Administration's New Paradigm. Torture, he said, "has become bureaucratized." Bad as the policy of rendition was before September 11th, Coleman said, "afterward, it really went out of control." He explained, "Now, instead of just sending people to third countries, we're holding them ourselves. We're taking people, and keeping them in our own custody in third countries. That's an enormous problem." Egypt, he pointed out, at least had an established legal system, however harsh. "There was a process there," Coleman said. "But what's our process? We have no method over there other than our laws—and we've decided to ignore them. What are we now, the Huns? If you don't talk to us, we'll kill you?"

From the beginning of the rendition program, Coleman said, there was no doubt that Egypt engaged in torture. He recalled the case of a suspect in the first World Trade Center bombing who fled to Egypt. The U.S. requested his return, and the Egyptians handed him over—wrapped head to toe in duct tape, like a mummy. (In another incident, an Egyptian with links to Al Qaeda who had coöperated with the U.S. government in a terrorism trial was picked up in Cairo and imprisoned by Egyptian authorities until U.S. diplomats secured his release. For days, he had been chained to a toilet, where guards had urinated on him.)

Under such circumstances, it might seem difficult for the U.S. government to legally justify dispatching suspects to Egypt. But Coleman said that since September 11th the C.I.A. "has seemed to think it's operating under different rules, that it has extralegal abilities outside the U.S." Agents, he said, have "told me that they have their own enormous office of general counsel that rarely tells them no. Whatever they do is all right. It all takes place overseas."

Coleman was angry that lawyers in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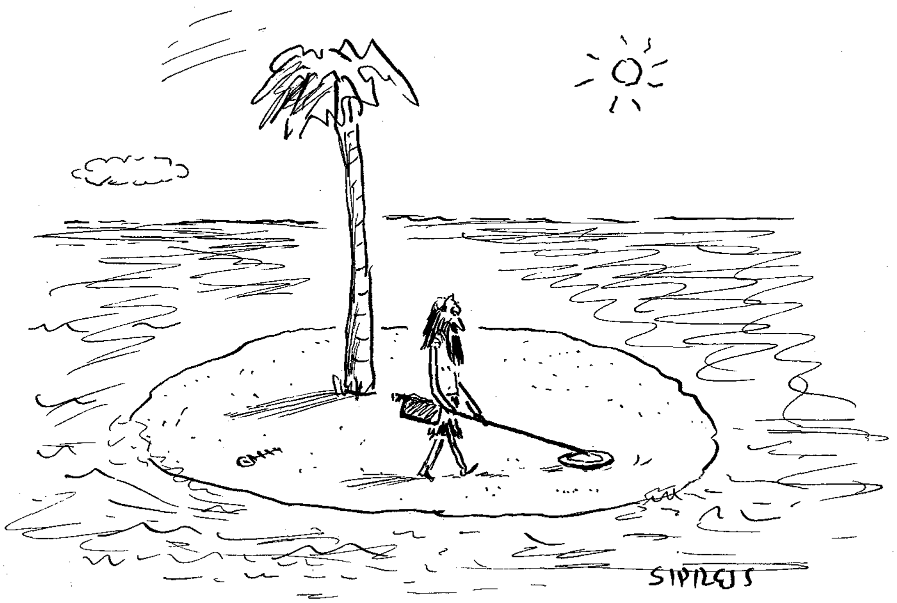


Washington were redefining the parameters of counter-terrorism interrogations. "Have any of these guys ever tried to talk to someone who's been deprived of his clothes?" he asked. "He's going to be ashamed, and humiliated, and cold. He'll tell you anything you want to hear to get his clothes back. There's no value in it." Coleman said that he had learned to treat even the most despicable suspects as if there were "a personal relationship, even if you can't stand them." He said that many of the suspects he had interrogated expected to be tortured, and were stunned to learn that they had rights under the American system. Due process made detainees more compliant, not less, Coleman said. He had also found that a defendant's right to legal counsel was beneficial not only to suspects but also to law-enforcement officers. Defense lawyers frequently persuaded detainees to coöperate with prosecutors, in exchange for plea agreements. "The lawyers show these guys there's a way out," Coleman said. "It's human nature. People don't coöperate with you unless they have some reason to." He added, "Brutalization doesn't work. We know that. Besides, you lose your soul."

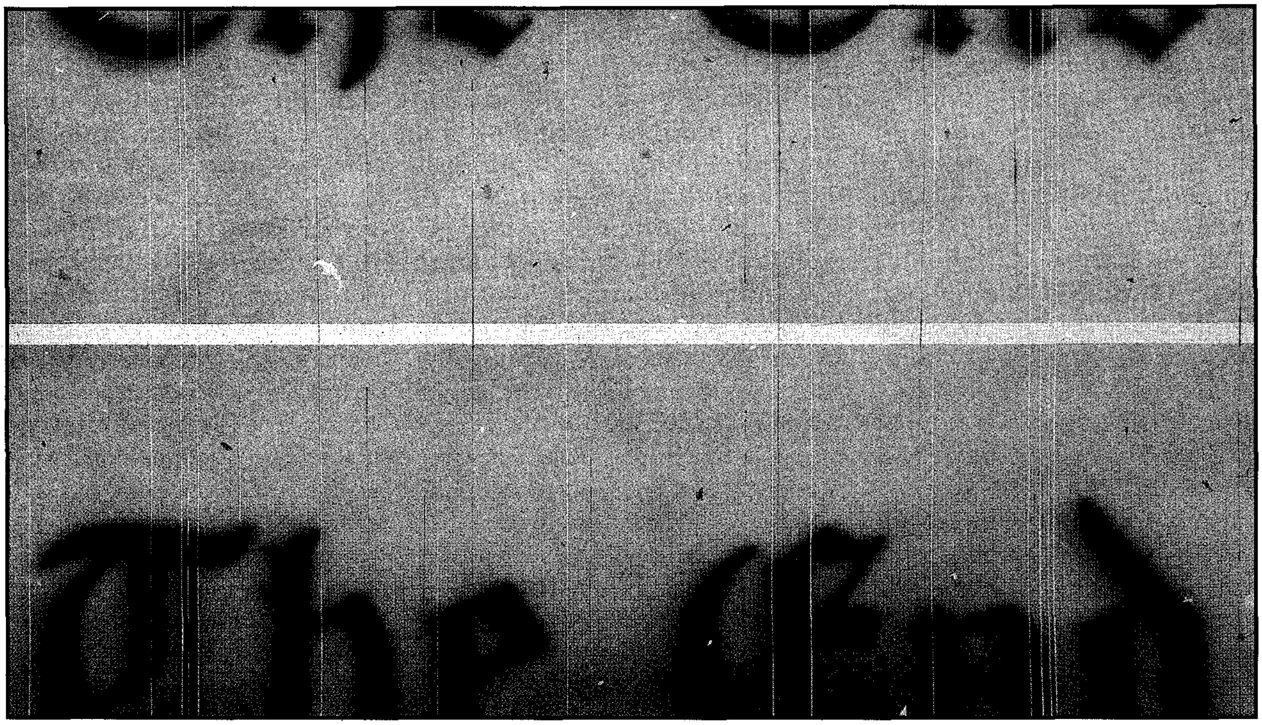
The Bush Administration's redefinition of the standards of interrogation took place almost entirely out of public view. One of the first officials to offer hints of the shift in approach was Cofer Black, who was then in charge of counter-terrorism at the C.I.A. On September 26, 2002, he addressed the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, and stated that the arrest and detention of terrorists was "a very highly classified area." He added, "All you need to know is that there was a 'before 9/11' and there was an 'after 9/11.' After 9/11, the gloves came off."

Laying the foundation for this shift was a now famous set of internal legal memos—some were leaked, others were made public by groups such as the N.Y.U. Center for Law and National Security. Most of these documents were generated by a small, hawkish group of politically appointed lawyers in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel and in the office of Alberto Gonzales, the White House counsel. Chief among the authors was John C. Yoo, the deputy assistant attorney general at the time. (A Yale Law School graduate and a former clerk to Justice Clarence Thomas, Yoo now teaches law at Berkeley.) Taken together, the memos advised the President that he had almost unfettered latitude in his prosecution of the war on terror. For many years, Yoo was a member of the Federalist Society, a fellowship of conservative intellectuals who view international law with skepticism, and September 11th offered an opportunity for him and others in the Administration to put their political ideas into practice. A former lawyer in the State Department recalled the mood of the Administration: "The Twin Towers were still smoldering. The atmosphere was intense. The tone at the top was aggressive—and understandably so. The Commander-in-Chief had used the words 'dead or alive' and vowed to bring the terrorists to justice or bring justice to them. There was a fury."

Soon after September 11th, Yoo and other Administration lawyers began advising President Bush that he did not have to comply with the Geneva Conventions in handling detainees in the war on terror. The lawyers classified these detainees not as civilians or prisoners of war—two categories of individuals protected by the Conventions—but as "illegal enemy combatants." The rubric included not only Al Qaeda members and supporters but the entire Taliban, because, Yoo and other lawyers argued, the country was a "failed state." Eric Lewis, an expert in international law who represents several Guantánamo detainees, said, "The Administration's lawyers created a third category and cast them outside the law."

The State Department, determined to uphold the Geneva Conventions, fought against Bush's lawyers and lost. In a forty-page memo to Yoo, dated January 11, 2002 (which has not been publicly released), William Taft IV, the State Department legal adviser, argued that Yoo's analysis was "seriously flawed." Taft told Yoo that his contention that the President could disregard the Geneva Conventions was "untenable," "incorrect," and "confused." Taft disputed Yoo's argument that Afghanistan, as a "failed state," was not covered by the Conventions. "The official United States position before, during, and after the emergence of the Taliban was that Afghanistan constituted a state," he wrote. Taft also warned Yoo that if the U.S. took the war on terrorism outside the Geneva Conventions, not only could U.S. soldiers be denied the protections of the Conventions—and therefore be prosecuted for crimes, including murder—but President Bush could be accused of a "grave breach" by other countries, and be prosecuted for war crimes. Taft sent a copy of his memo to Gonzales, hoping that his dissent would reach the President. Within days, Yoo sent Taft a lengthy rebuttal.

Others in the Administration wor-



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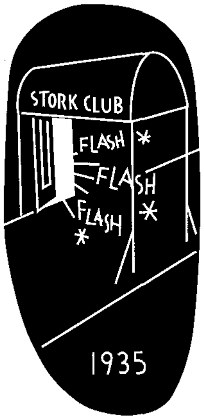
ried that the President's lawyers were wayward. "Lawyers have to be the voice of reason and sometimes have to put the brakes on, no matter how much the client wants to hear something else," the former State Department lawyer said. "Our job is to keep the train on the tracks. It's not to tell the President, 'Here are the ways to avoid the law.' " He went on, "There is no such thing as a non-covered person under the Geneva Conventions. It's nonsense. The protocols cover fighters in everything from world wars to local rebellions." The lawyer said that Taft urged Yoo and Gonzales to warn President Bush that he would "be seen as a war criminal by the rest of the world," but Taft was ignored. This may be because President Bush had already made up his mind. According to top State Department officials, Bush decided to suspend the Geneva Conventions on January 8, 2002—three days before Taft sent his memo to Yoo.

The legal pronouncements from Washington about the status of detainees were painstakingly constructed to include numerous loopholes. For example, in February, 2002, President Bush issued a written directive stating that, even though he had determined that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to the war on terror, all detainees should be treated "humanely." A close reading of the directive, however, revealed that it referred only to military interrogators—not to C.I.A. officials. This exemption allowed the C.I.A. to continue using interrogation methods, including rendition, that stopped just short of torture. Further, an August, 2002, memo written largely by Yoo but signed by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee argued that torture required the intent to inflict suffering "equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death." According to the *Times*, a secret memo issued by Administration lawyers authorized the C.I.A. to use novel interrogation methods—including "waterboarding," in which a suspect is bound and immersed in water until he nearly drowns. Dr. Allen Keller, the director of the Bellevue/N.Y.U. Program for Survivors of Torture, told me that he had treated a number of people who had been subjected to such forms of near-asphyxiation, and he argued that it was indeed torture. Some victims were still traumatized years later, he said. One patient couldn't take showers, and panicked when it rained. "The fear of being killed is a terrifying experience," he said.



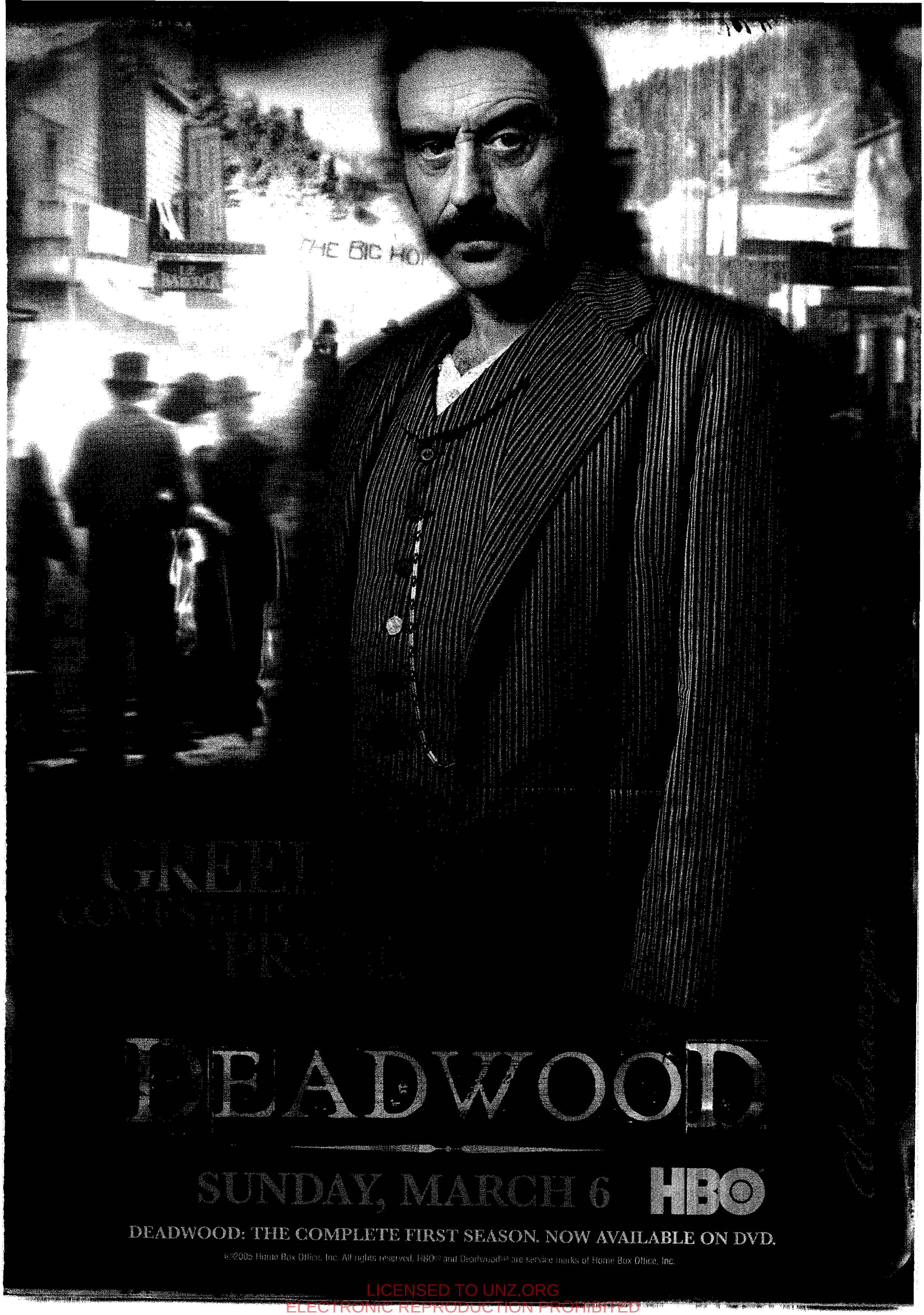
The Administration's justification of the rough treatment of detainees appears to have passed down the chain of command. In late 2003, at Abu Ghraib prison, in Iraq, photographs were taken that documented prisoners being subjected to grotesque abuse by U.S. soldiers. After the scandal became public, the Justice Department revised the narrow definition of torture outlined in the Bybee memo, using language that more strongly prohibited physical abuse during interrogations. But the Administration has fought hard against legislative efforts to rein in the C.I.A. In the past few months, Republican leaders, at the White House's urging, have blocked two attempts in the Senate to ban the C.I.A. from using cruel and inhuman interrogation methods. An attempt in the House to outlaw extraordinary rendition, led by Representative Markey, also failed.

In a recent phone interview, Yoo was soft-spoken and resolute. "Why is it so hard for people to understand that there is a category of behavior not covered by the legal system?" he said. "What were pirates? They weren't fighting on behalf of any nation. What were slave traders? Historically, there were people so bad that they were not given protection of the laws. There were no specific provisions for their trial, or imprisonment. If you were an illegal combatant, you didn't deserve the protection of the laws of war." Yoo cited precedents for his position. "The Lincoln assassins were treated this way, too," he said. "They were tried in a military court, and executed." The point, he said, was that the Geneva Conventions' "simple binary classification of civilian or soldier isn't accurate."

Yoo also argued that the Constitution granted the President plenary powers to override the U.N. Convention Against Torture when he is acting in the nation's defense—a position that has drawn dissent from many scholars. As Yoo saw it, Congress doesn't have the power to "tie the President's hands in regard to torture as an interrogation technique." He continued, "It's the core of the Commander-in-Chief function. They can't prevent the President from ordering torture." If the President were to abuse his powers as Commander-in-Chief, Yoo said, the constitutional remedy was impeachment. He went on to suggest that President Bush's victory in the 2004 election, along with the relatively mild challenge to Gonzales mounted by the Democrats in Congress, was "proof that the debate is over." He said, "The issue is dying out. The public has had its referendum."

A few months after September 11th, the U.S. gained custody of its first high-ranking Al Qaeda figure, Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi. He had run bin Laden's terrorist training camp in Khalden, Afghanistan, and was detained in Pakistan. Zacarias Moussaoui, who was already in U.S. custody, and Richard Reid, the Shoe Bomber, had both spent time at the Khalden camp. At the F.B.I.'s field office in New York, Jack Cloonan, an officer who had worked for the agency since 1972, struggled to maintain control of the legal process in Afghanistan. C.I.A. and F.B.I. agents were vying to take possession of Libi. Cloonan, who worked with Dan Coleman on anti-terrorism cases for many years, said he felt that "neither the Moussaoui case nor the Reid case was a slam dunk." He became intent on securing Libi's testimony as a witness against them. He advised his F.B.I. colleagues in Afghanistan to question Libi respectfully, "and handle this like it was being done right here, in my office in New York." He recalled, "I remember talking on a secure line to them. I told them, 'Do yourself a favor, read the guy his rights. It may be old-fashioned, but this will come out if we don't. It may take ten years, but it will hurt you, and the bureau's reputation, if you don't. Have it stand as a shining example of what we feel is right.' "

Cloonan's F.B.I. colleagues advised Libi of his rights and took turns with C.I.A. agents in questioning him. After a few days, F.B.I. officials felt that they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were developing a good rapport with him. The C.I.A. agents, however, felt that he was lying to them, and needed tougher interrogation.

To Cloonan's dismay, the C.I.A. reportedly rendered Libi to Egypt. He was seen boarding a plane in Afghanistan, restrained by handcuffs and ankle cuffs, his mouth covered by duct tape. Cloonan, who retired from the F.B.I. in 2002, said, "At least we got information in ways that wouldn't shock the conscience of the court. And no one will have to seek revenge for what I did." He added, "We need to show the world that we can lead, and not just by military might."

After Libi was taken to Egypt, the F.B.I. lost track of him. Yet he evidently played a crucial background role in Secretary of State Colin Powell's momentous address to the United Nations Security Council in February, 2003, which argued the case for a preëmptive war against Iraq. In his speech, Powell did not refer to Libi by name, but he announced to the world that "a senior terrorist operative" who "was responsible for one of Al Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan" had told U.S. authorities that Saddam Hussein had offered to train two Al Qaeda operatives in the use of "chemical or biological weapons."

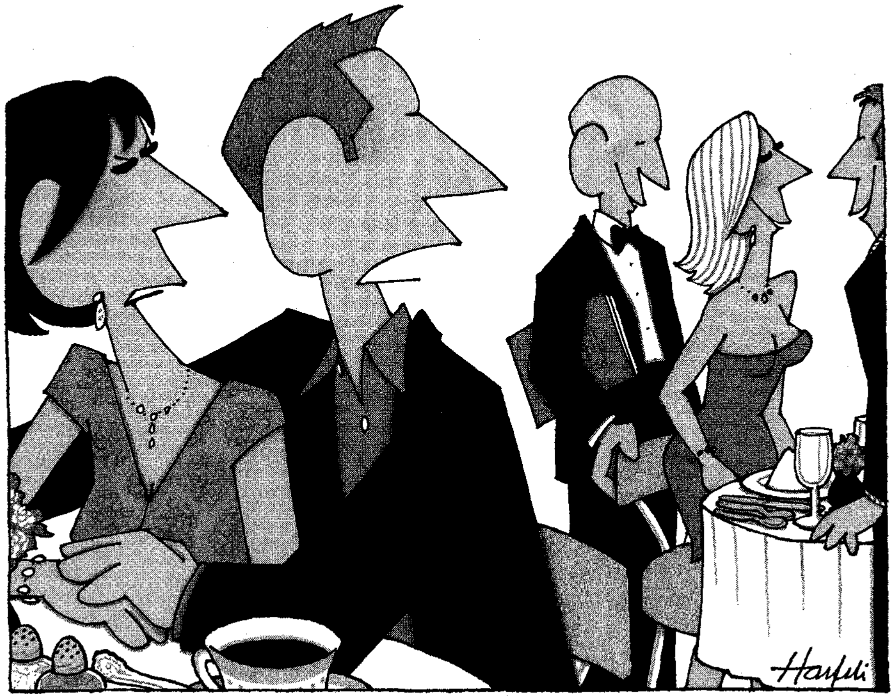
Last summer, *Newsweek* reported that Libi, who was eventually transferred from Egypt to Guantánamo Bay, was the source of the incendiary charge cited by Powell, and that he had recanted. By then, the first anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq had passed and the 9/11 Commission had declared that there was no known evidence of a working relationship between Saddam and Al Qaeda. Dan Coleman was disgusted when he heard about Libi's false confession. "It was ridiculous for interrogators to think Libi would have known anything about Iraq," he said. "I could have told them that. He ran a training camp. He wouldn't have had anything to do with Iraq. Administration officials were always pushing us to come up with links, but there weren't any. The reason they got bad information is that they beat it out of him. You never get good information from someone that way."

Most authorities on interrogation, in and out of government, agree that torture and lesser forms of physical coercion succeed in producing confessions. The problem is that these confessions aren't necessarily true. Three of the Guantánamo detainees released by the U.S. to Great Britain last year, for example, had confessed that they had appeared in a blurry video, obtained by American investigators, that documented a group of acolytes meeting with bin Laden in Afghanistan. As reported in the London *Observer*, British intelligence officials arrived at Guantánamo with evidence that the accused men had been living in England at the time the video was made. The detainees told British authorities that they had been coerced into making false confessions.

Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, told me that "the U.S. accepts quite a lot of intelligence from the Uzbeks" that has been extracted from suspects who have been tortured. This information was, he said, "largely rubbish." He said he knew of "at least three" instances where the U.S. had rendered suspected militants from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan. Although Murray does not know the fate of the three men, he said, "They almost certainly would have been tortured." In Uzbekistan, he said, "partial boiling of a hand or an arm is quite common." He also knew of two cases in which prisoners had been boiled to death.

In 2002, Murray, concerned that America was complicit with such a regime, asked his deputy to discuss the problem with the C.I.A.'s station chief in Tashkent. He said that the station chief did not dispute that intelligence was being obtained under torture. But the C.I.A. did not consider this a problem. "There was no reason to think they were perturbed," Murray told me.

Scientific research on the efficacy of torture and rough interrogation is limited, because of the moral and legal impediments to experimentation. Tom Parker, a former officer for M.I.5, the British intelligence agency, who teaches at Yale, argued that, whether or not forceful interrogations yield accurate information from terrorist suspects, a larger problem is that many detainees "have nothing to tell." For many years, he said, British authorities subjected members of the Irish Republican Army to forceful interrogations, but, in the end, the government concluded that "detainees aren't valuable." A more effective strategy, Parker said, was "being creative" about human intelligence gathering, such as infiltration and eavesdropping. "The U.S. is doing what the British did in the nineteen-seventies, detaining people and violating their civil liberties," he said. "It did nothing but exacerbate the situa-



"I do not have a roving eye. I have attention-deficit disorder."

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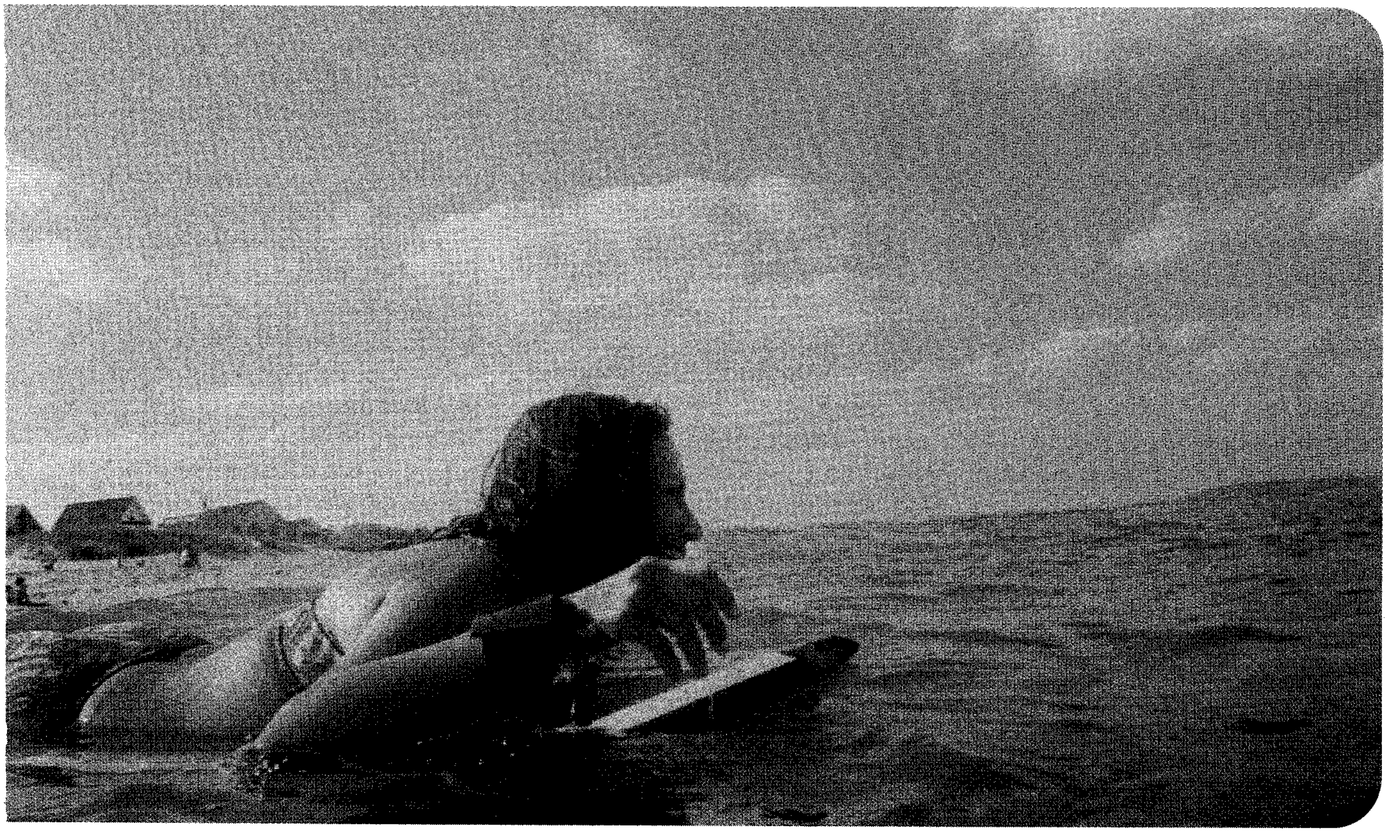
for not wearing shoes all week.



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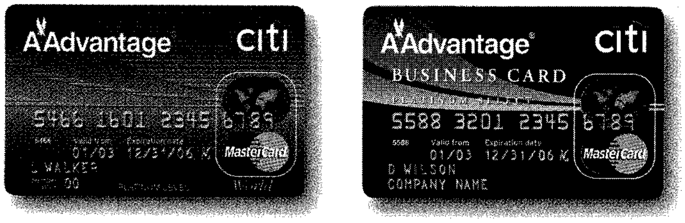

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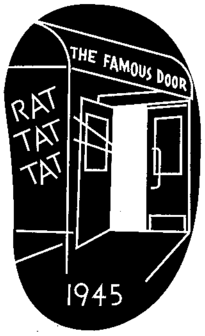
tion. Most of those interned went back to terrorism. You'll end up radicalizing the entire population."

Although the Administration has tried to keep the details of extraordinary renditions secret, several accounts have surfaced that reveal how the program operates. On December 18, 2001, at Stockholm's Bromma Airport, a half-dozen hooded security officials ushered two Egyptian asylum seekers, Muhammad Zery and Ahmed Agiza, into an empty office. They cut off the Egyptians' clothes with scissors, forcibly administered sedatives by suppository, swaddled them in diapers, and dressed them in orange jumpsuits. As was reported by "Kalla Fakta," a Swedish television news program, the suspects were blindfolded, placed in handcuffs and leg irons; according to a declassified Swedish government report, the men were then flown to Cairo on a U.S.-registered Gulfstream V jet. Swedish officials have claimed that they received assurances from the Egyptians that Zery and Agiza would be treated humanely. But both suspects have said, through lawyers and family members, that they were tortured with electrical charges to their genitals. (Zery said that he was also forced to lie on an electrified bed frame.) After spending two years in an Egyptian prison, Zery was released. Agiza, a physician who had once been an ally of Zawahiri but later renounced him and terrorism, was convicted on terrorism charges by Egypt's Supreme Military Court. He was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison.



Another case suggests that the Bush Administration is authorizing the rendition of suspects for whom it has little evidence of guilt. Mamdouh Habib, an Egyptian-born citizen of Australia, was apprehended in Pakistan in October, 2001. According to his wife, Habib, a radical Muslim with four children, was visiting the country to tour religious schools and determine if his family should move to Pakistan. A spokesman at the Pentagon has claimed that Habib—who has expressed support for Islamist causes—spent most of his trip in Afghanistan, and was "either supporting hostile forces or on the battlefield fighting illegally against the U.S." Last month, after a three-year ordeal, Habib was released without charges.

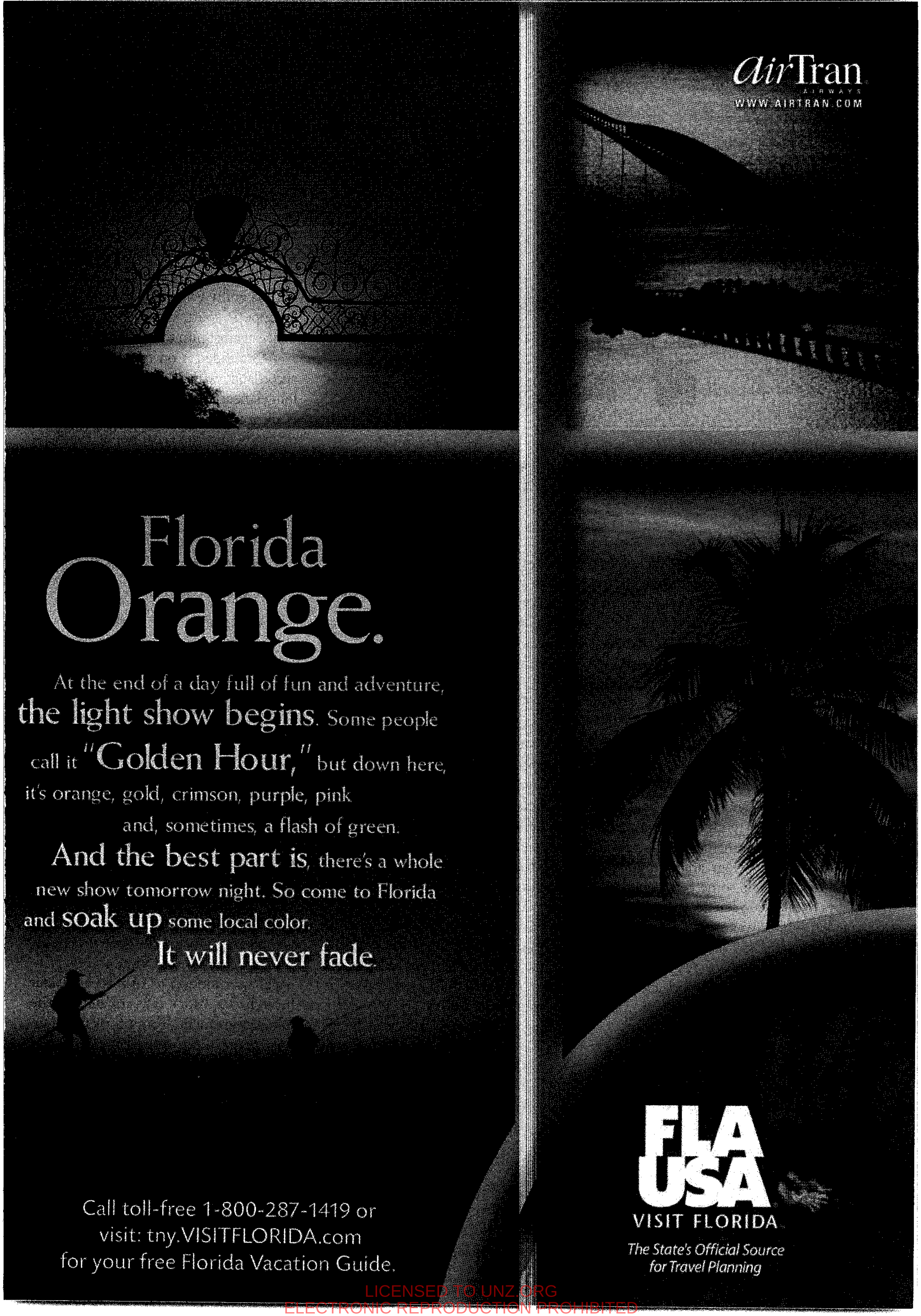
Habib is one of a handful of people subjected to rendition who are being represented pro bono by human-rights lawyers. According to a recently unsealed document prepared by Joseph Margulies, a lawyer affiliated with the MacArthur Justice Center at the University of Chicago Law School, Habib said that he was first interrogated in Pakistan for three weeks, in part at a facility in Islamabad, where he said he was brutalized. Some of his interrogators, he claimed, spoke English with American accents. (Having lived in Australia for years, Habib is comfortable in English.) He was then placed in the custody of Americans, two of whom wore black short-sleeved shirts and had distinctive tattoos: one depicted an American flag attached to a flagpole shaped like a finger, the other a large cross. The Americans took him to an airfield, cut his clothes off with scissors, dressed him in a jumpsuit, covered his eyes with opaque goggles, and placed him aboard a private plane. He was flown to Egypt.

According to Margulies, Habib was held and interrogated for six months. "Never, to my knowledge, did he make an appearance in any court," Margulies told me. Margulies was also unaware of any evidence suggesting that the U.S. sought a promise from Egypt that Habib would not be tortured. For his part, Habib claimed to have been subjected to horrific conditions. He said that he was beaten frequently with blunt instruments, including an object that he likened to an electric "cattle prod." And he was told that if he didn't confess to belonging to Al Qaeda he would be anally raped by specially trained dogs. (Hossam el-Hamalawy said that Egyptian security forces train German shepherds for police work, and that other prisoners have also been threatened with rape by trained dogs, although he knows of no one who has been assaulted in this way.) Habib said that he was shackled and forced to stand in three torture chambers: one room was filled with water up to his chin, requiring him to stand on tiptoe for hours; another chamber, filled with water up to his knees, had a ceiling so low that he was forced into a prolonged, painful stoop; in the third, he stood in water up to his ankles, and within sight of an electric switch and a generator, which his jailers said would be used to electrocute him if he didn't confess. Habib's lawyer said that he submitted to his interrogators' demands and made multiple confessions, all of them false. (Egyptian authorities have described such allegations of torture as "mythology.")

After his imprisonment in Egypt, Habib said that he was returned to U.S. custody and was flown to Bagram Air Force Base, in Afghanistan, and then on to Guantánamo Bay, where he was detained until last month. On January 11th, a few days after the Washington *Post* published an article on Habib's case, the Pentagon, offering virtually no explanation, agreed to release him into the custody of the Australian government. "Habib was released because he was hopelessly embarrassing," Eric Freedman, a professor at Hofstra Law School, who has been involved in the detainees' legal defense, says. "It's a large crack in the wall in a house of cards that is midway through tumbling down." In a prepared statement, a Pentagon spokesman, Lieutenant Commander Flex Plexico, said there was "no evidence" that Habib "was tortured or abused" while he was in U.S. custody. He also said that Habib had received "Al Qaeda training," which included instruction in making false abuse allegations. Habib's claims, he suggested, "fit the standard operating procedure."

The U.S. government has not responded directly to Habib's charge that he was rendered to Egypt. However, several other men who were recently released from Guantánamo reported that Habib told them about it. Jamal al-Harith, a British detainee who was sent home to Manchester, England, last March, told me in a phone interview that at one point he had been placed in a cage across from Habib. "He said that he had been in Egypt for about six months, and they had injected him with drugs, and hung him from the ceiling, and beaten him very, very badly," Harith recalled. "He seemed to be in pain. He was haggard-looking. I never saw him walk. He always had to be held up."

Another piece of evidence that may



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support Habib's story is a set of flight logs documenting the travels of a white Gulfstream V jet—the plane that seems to have been used for renditions by the U.S. government. These logs show that on April 9, 2002, the jet left Dulles Airport, in Washington, and landed in Cairo. According to Habib's attorney, this was around the same time that Habib said he was released by the Egyptians in Cairo, and returned to U.S. custody. The flight logs were obtained by Stephen Grey, a British journalist who has written a number of stories on renditions for British publications, including the London *Sunday Times*. Grey's logs are incomplete, but they chronicle some three hundred flights over three years by the fourteen-seat jet, which was marked on its tail with the code N379P. (It was recently changed, to N8068V.) All the flights originated from Dulles Airport, and many of them landed at restricted U.S. military bases.

Even if Habib is a terrorist aligned with Al Qaeda, as Pentagon officials have claimed, it seems unlikely that prosecutors would ever be able to build a strong case against him, given the treatment that he allegedly received in Egypt. John Radsan, a law professor at William Mitchell College of Law, in St. Paul, Minnesota, who worked in the general counsel's office of the C.I.A. until last year, said, "I don't think anyone's thought through what we do with these people."

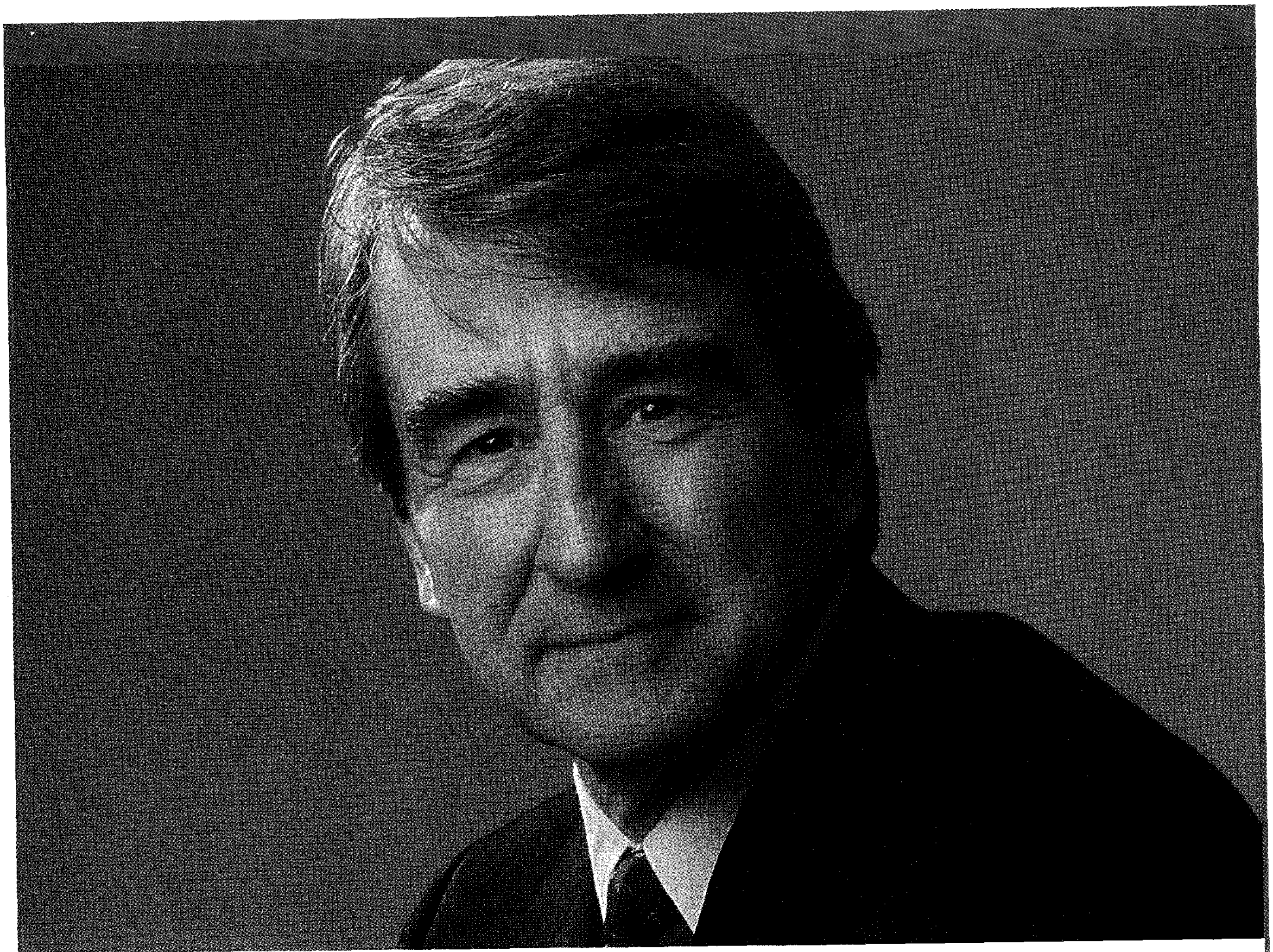
Similar problems complicate the case of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was captured in Pakistan in March, 2003. Mohammed has reportedly been "waterboarded" during interrogations. If so, Radsan said, "it would be almost impossible to take him into a criminal trial. Any evidence derived from his interrogation could be seen as fruit from the poisonous tree. I think the government is considering some sort of military tribunal somewhere down the line. But, even there, there are still constitutional requirements that you can't bring in involuntary confessions."

The trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, in Alexandria, Virginia—the only U.S. criminal trial of a suspect linked to the September 11th attacks—is stalled. It's been more than three years since Attorney General John Ashcroft called Moussaoui's indictment "a chronicle of evil." The case has been held up by Moussaoui's demand—and the Bush Administration's refusal—to let him call as witnesses Al Qaeda members held in government custody, including Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. (Bin al-Shibh is thought to have been tortured.) Government attorneys have argued that producing the witnesses would disrupt the interrogation process.

Similarly, German officials fear that they may be unable to convict any members of the Hamburg cell that is believed to have helped plan the September 11th attacks, on charges connected to the plot, in part because the U.S. government refuses to produce bin al-Shibh and Mohammed as witnesses. Last year, one of the Hamburg defendants, Mounir Motassadeq, became the first person to be convicted in the planning of the attacks, but his guilty verdict was overturned by an appeals court, which found the evidence against him too weak.

Motassadeq is on trial again, but, in accordance with German law, he is no longer being imprisoned. Although he is alleged to have overseen the payment of funds into the accounts of the September 11th hijackers—and to have been friendly with Mohamed Atta, who flew one of the planes that hit the Twin Towers—he walks freely to and from the courthouse each day. The U.S. has supplied the German court with edited summaries of testimony from Mohammed and bin al-Shibh. But Gerhard Strate, Motassadeq's defense lawyer, told me, "We are not satisfied with the summaries. If you want to find the truth, we need to know who has been interrogating them, and under what circumstances. We don't have any answers to this." The refusal by the U.S. to produce the witnesses in person, Strate said, "puts the court in a ridiculous position." He added, "I don't know why they won't produce the witnesses. The first thing you think is that the U.S. government has something to hide."

In fact, the Justice Department recently admitted that it had something to hide in relation to Maher Arar, the Canadian engineer. The government invoked the rarely used "state secrets privilege" in a motion to dismiss a lawsuit brought by Arar's lawyers against the U.S. government. To go forward in an open court, the government said, would jeopardize the "intelligence, foreign policy and national security interests of the United States." Barbara Olshansky, the assistant legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which is representing Arar, said that government lawyers "are saying this case can't be tried, and the classified information on which they're basing this argument can't even be shared with the opposing lawyers. It's



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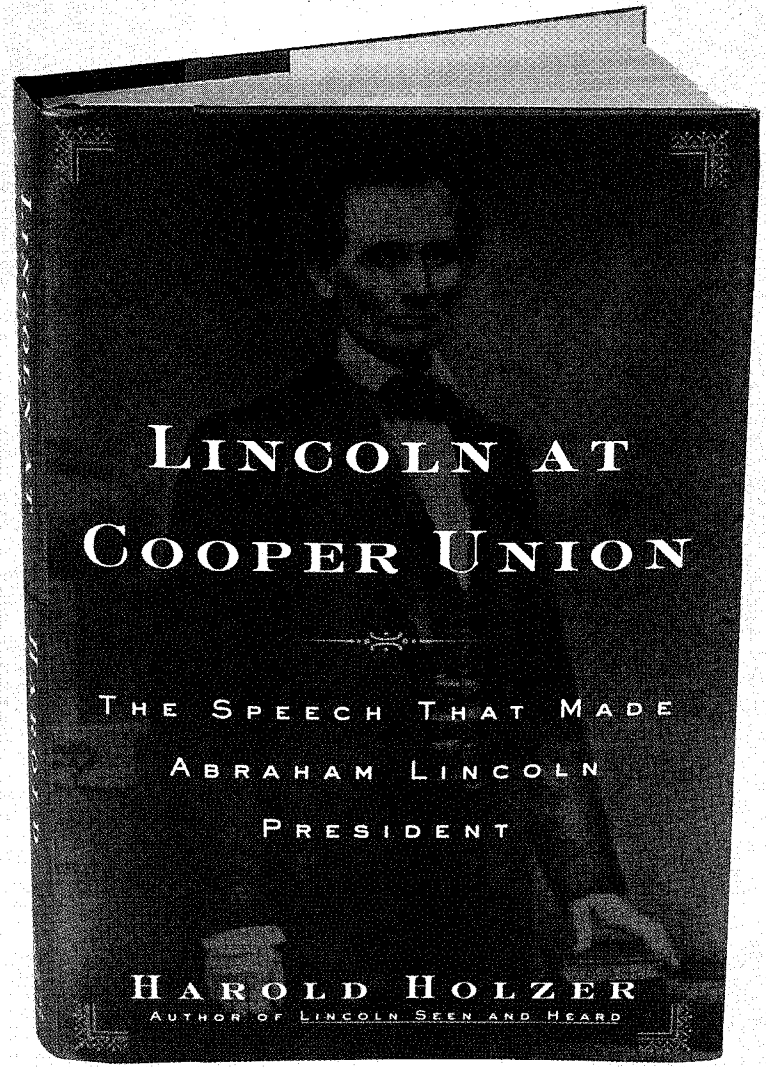

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the height of arrogance—they think they can do anything they want in the name of the global war on terrorism."

Nadja Dizdarevic is a thirty-year-old mother of four who lives in Sarajevo. On October 21, 2001, her husband, Hadj Boudella, a Muslim of Algerian descent, and five other Algerians living in Bosnia were arrested after U.S. authorities tipped off the Bosnian government to an alleged plot by the group to blow up the American and British Embassies in Sarajevo. One of the suspects reportedly placed some seventy phone calls to the Al Qaeda leader Abu Zubaydah in the days after September 11th. Boudella and his wife, however, maintain that neither he nor several of the other defendants knew the man who had allegedly contacted Zubaydah. And an investigation by the Bosnian government turned up no confirmation that the calls to Zubaydah were made at all, according to the men's American lawyers, Rob Kirsch and Stephen Oleskey.

At the request of the U.S., the Bosnian government held all six men for three months, but was unable to substantiate any criminal charges against them. On January 17, 2002, the Bosnian Supreme Court ruled that they should be released. Instead, as the men left prison, they were handcuffed, forced to put on surgical masks with nose clips, covered in hoods, and herded into waiting unmarked cars by masked figures, some of whom appeared to be members of the Bosnian special forces. Boudella's wife had come to the prison to meet her husband, and she recalled that she recognized him, despite the hood, because he was wearing a new suit that she had brought him the day before. "I will never forget that night," she said. "It was snowing. I was screaming for someone to help." A crowd gathered, and tried to block the convoy, but it sped off. The suspects were taken to a military airbase and kept in a freezing hangar for hours; one member of the group later claimed that he saw one of the abductors remove his Bosnian uniform, revealing that he was in fact American. The U.S. government has neither confirmed nor denied its role in the operation.

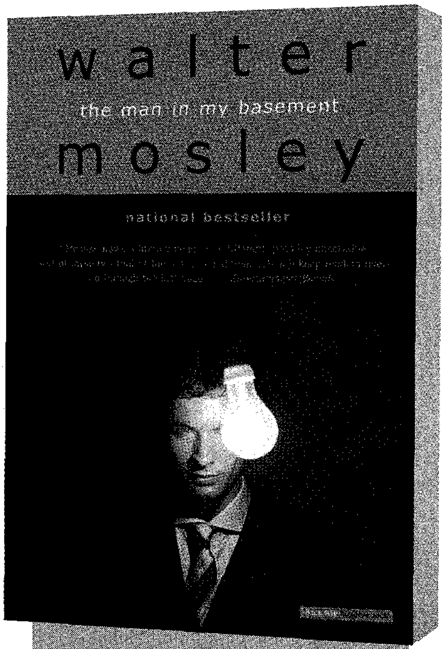
Six days after the abduction, Boudella's wife received word that her husband and the other men had been sent to Guantánamo. One man in the group has alleged that two of his fingers were broken by U.S. soldiers. Little is publicly known about the welfare of the others.

Boudella's wife said that she was astounded that her husband could be seized without charge or trial, at home during peacetime and after his own government had exonerated him. The term "enemy combatant" perplexed her. "He is an enemy of whom?" she asked. "In combat where?" She said that her view of America had changed. "I have not changed my opinion about its people, but unfortunately I have changed my opinion about its respect for human rights," she said. "It is no longer the leader in the world. It has become the leader in the violation of human rights."

In October, Boudella attempted to plead his innocence before the Pentagon's Combatant Status Review Tribunal. The C.S.R.T. is the Pentagon's answer to the Supreme Court's ruling last year, over the Bush Administration's objections, that detainees in Guantánamo had a right to challenge their imprisonment. Boudella was not allowed to bring a lawyer to the proceeding. And the tribunal said that it was "unable to locate" a copy of the Bosnian Supreme Court's verdict freeing him, which he had requested that it read. Transcripts show that Boudella stated, "I am against any terrorist acts," and asked, "How could I be part of an organization that I strongly believe has harmed my people?" The tribunal rejected his plea, as it has rejected three hundred and eighty-seven of the three hundred and ninety-three pleas it has heard. Upon learning this, Boudella's wife sent the following letter to her husband's American lawyers:

> Dear Friends, I am so shocked by this information that it seems as if my blood froze in my veins, I can't breathe and I wish I was dead. I can't believe these things can happen, that they can come and take your husband away, overnight and without reason, destroy your family, ruin your dreams after three years of fight. . . . Please, tell me, what can I still do for him? . . . Is this decision final, what are the legal remedies? Help me to understand because, as far as I know the law, this is insane, contrary to all possible laws and human rights. Please help me, I don't want to lose him.

John Radsan, the former C.I.A. lawyer, offered a reply of sorts. "As a society, we haven't figured out what the rough rules are yet," he said. "There are hardly any rules for illegal enemy combatants. It's the law of the jungle. And right now we happen to be the strongest animal." ♦



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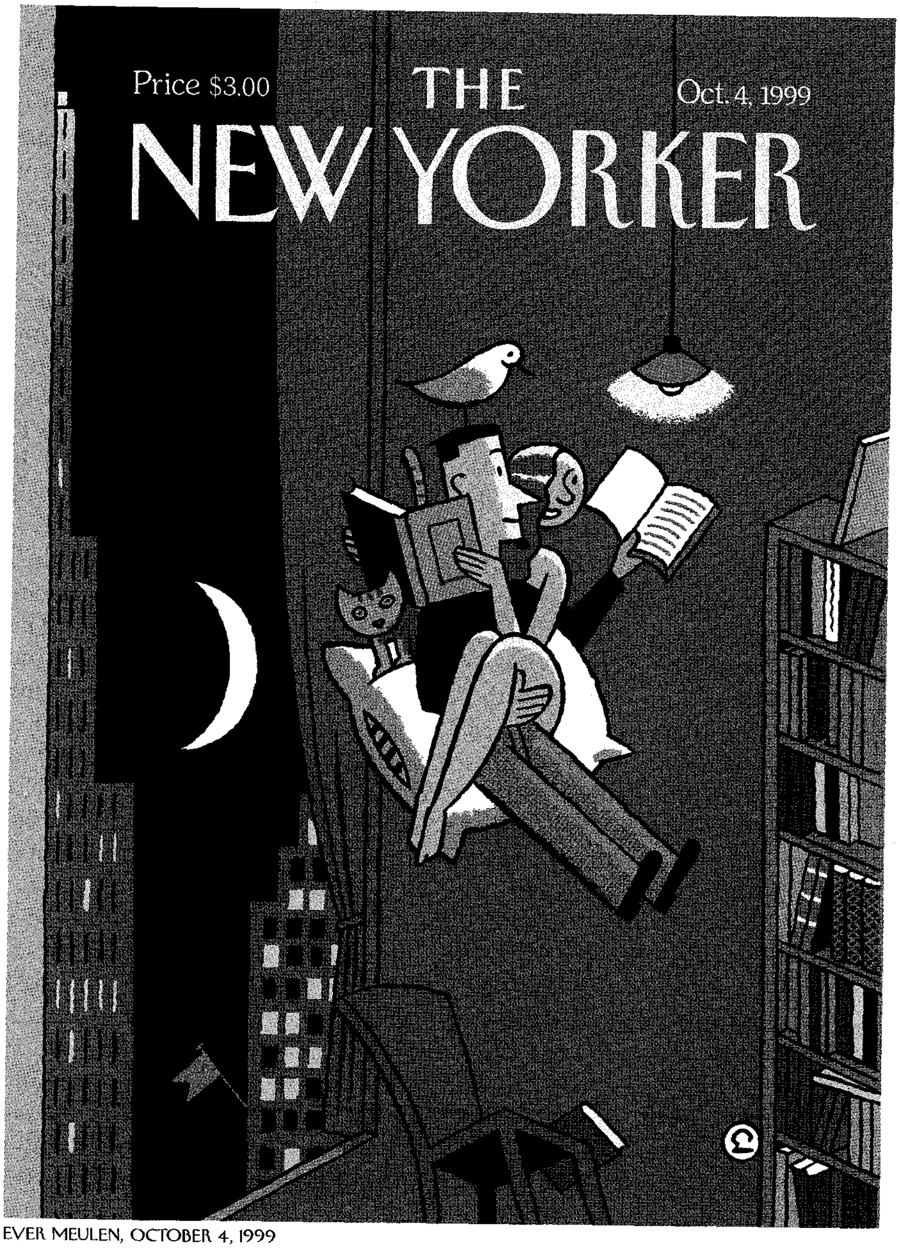
COVER STORIES

BOOKS AND READING

A love of books and literature is a binding passion for *The New Yorker's* readers; it connects them to the magazine and to each other. Some will feel a twinge of longing upon seeing Arthur Getz's 1957 cover, in which a book dealer enjoys the bustle of a sunny street from the protection of his dark shop. In a 1999 Ever Meulen cover, a young urban couple and their pets find a way to read in a cramped New York apartment that nevertheless has room for a bookshelf.

Artists share with writers the daunting experience of having to face a blank sheet of paper; as a result, they often depict the creative act. A writer might stay at the typewriter until a good idea hits (as in a 2002 cover by Barry Blitt), or step timidly into the ocean of inspiration (as in a 1991 Benoît van Innis cover). There also seems to be a consistent fashion associated with the literary life—if, that is, you can call a round physique and round glasses a fashion, as it seems to be in a 1932 Rea Irvin cover and a Ha cover seventy years later.

Early *New Yorker* covers often viewed the literary profession as a male prerogative. Leonard Dove's society columnist, from 1952, is an unusually glam-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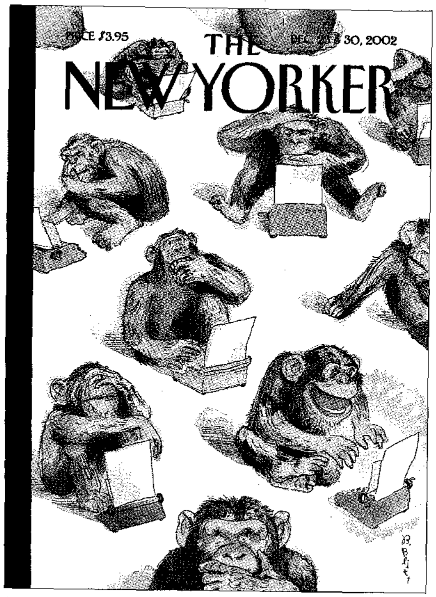
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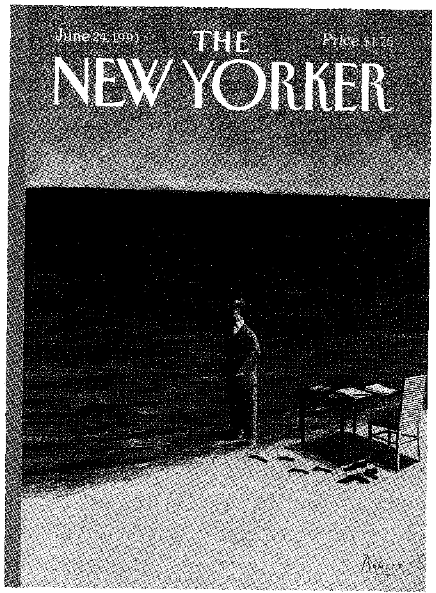
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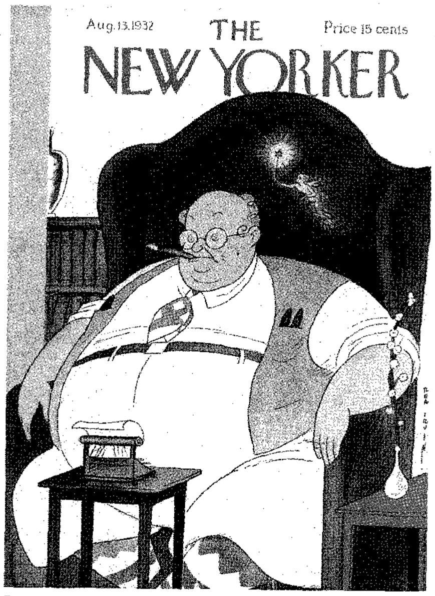
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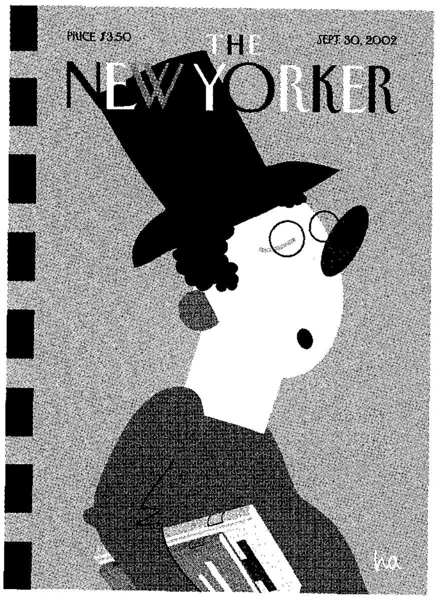
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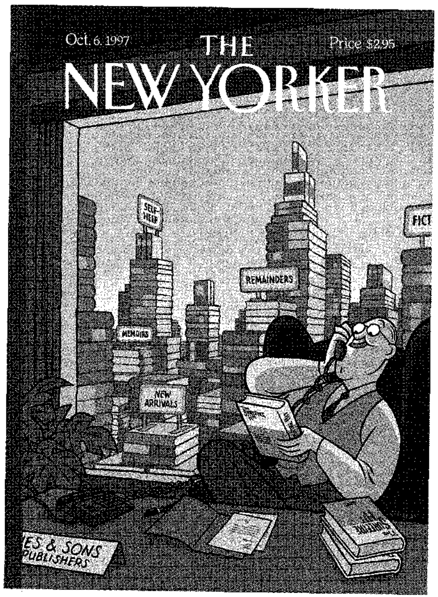
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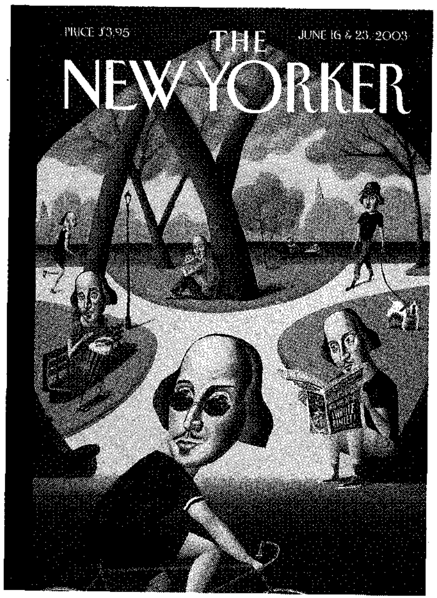
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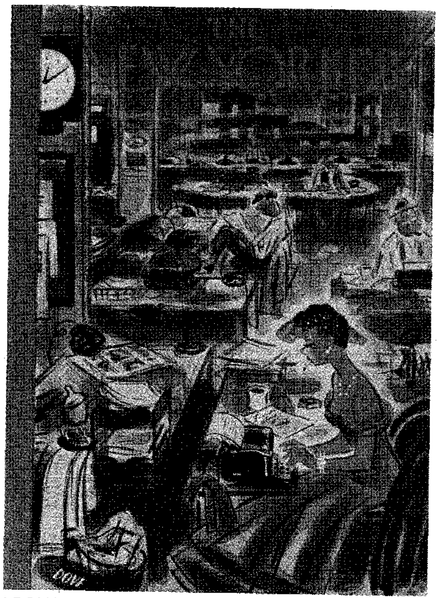

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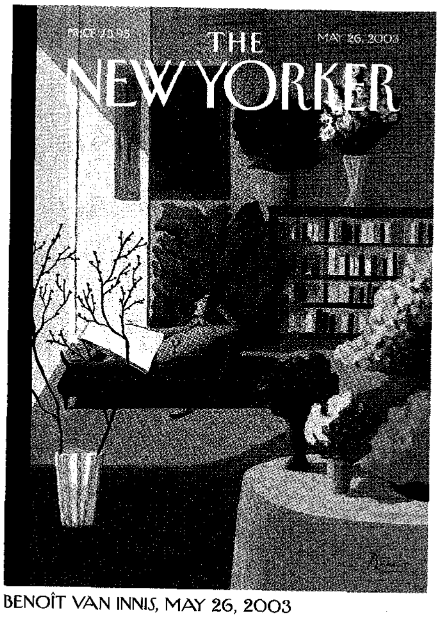
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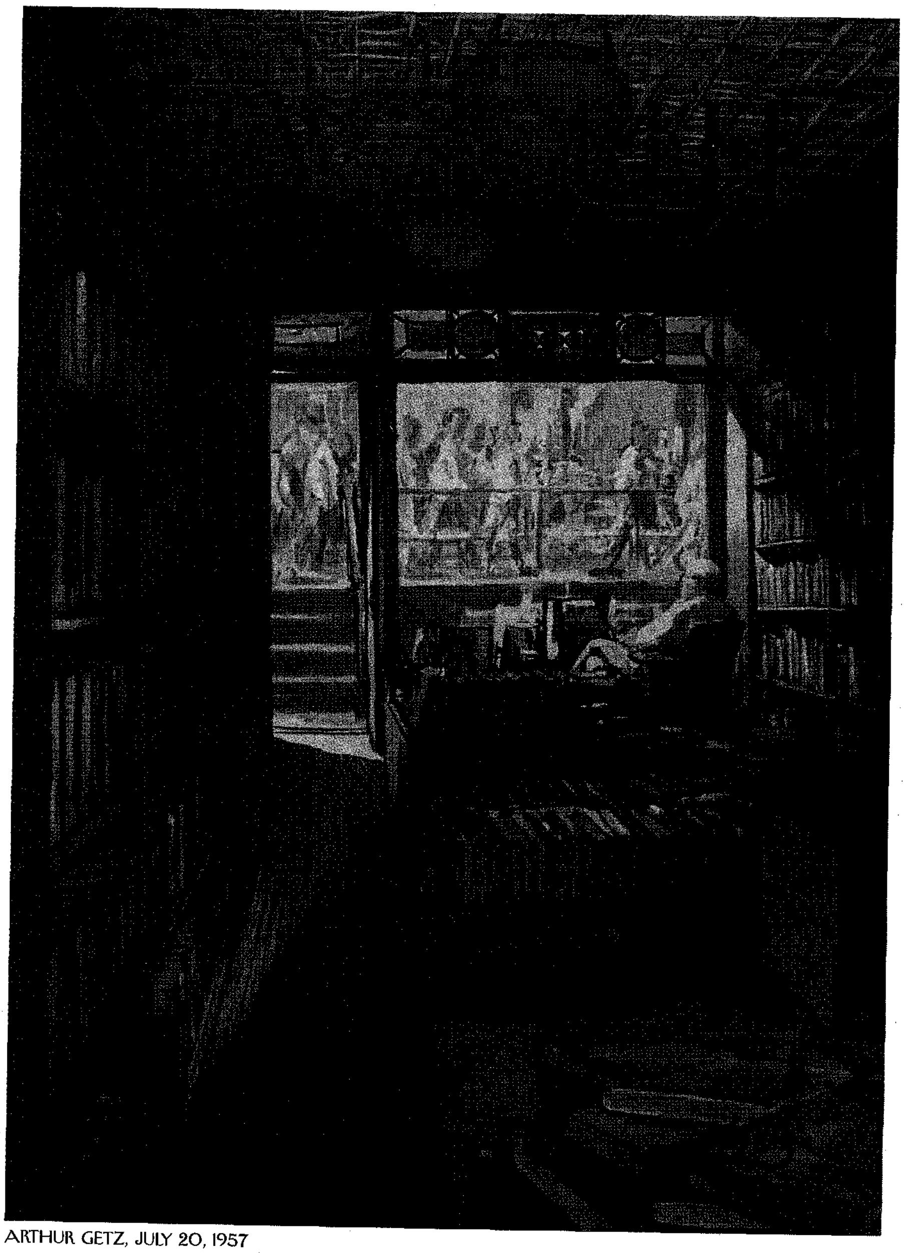

ARTHUR GETZ, JULY 20, 1957

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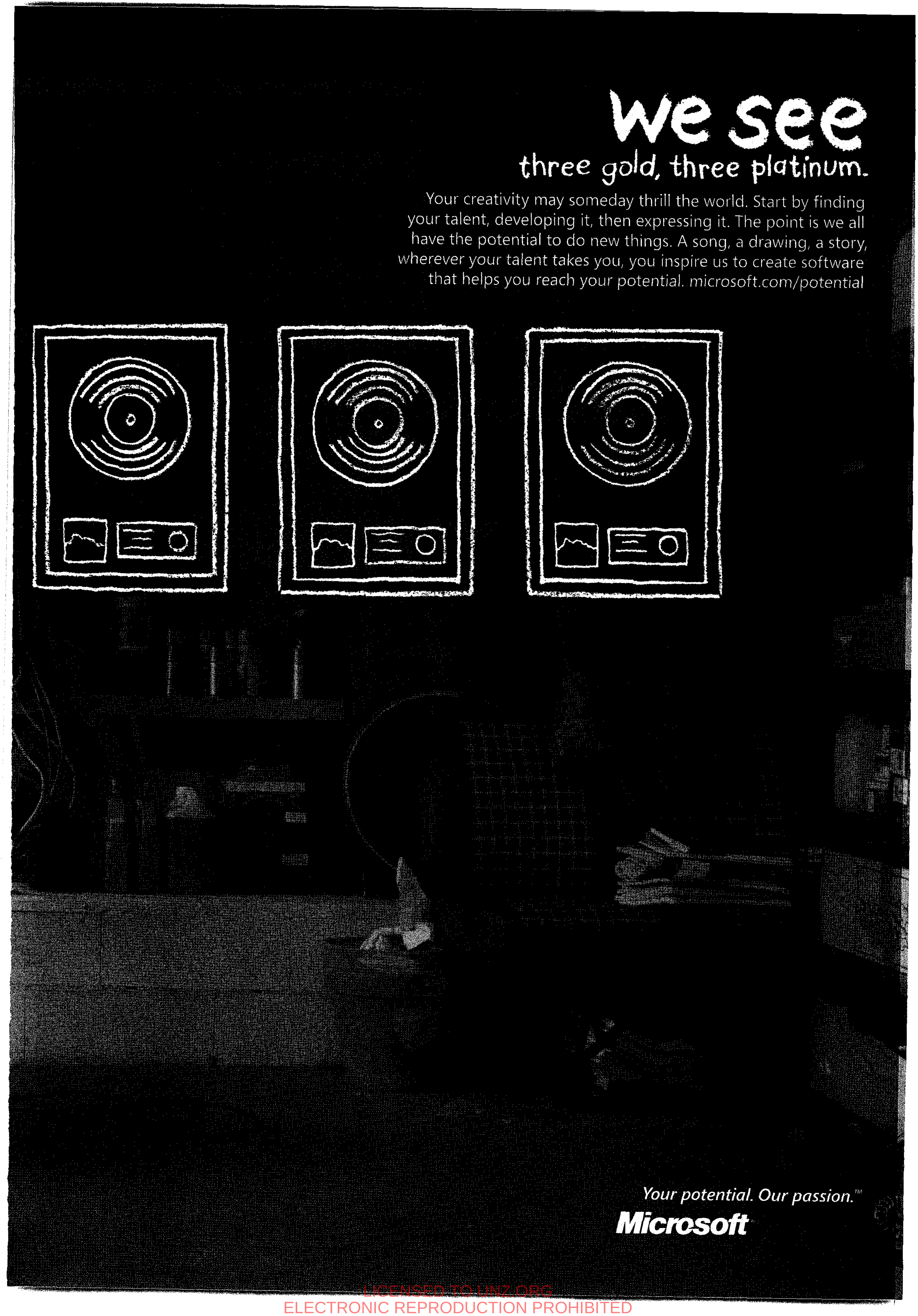
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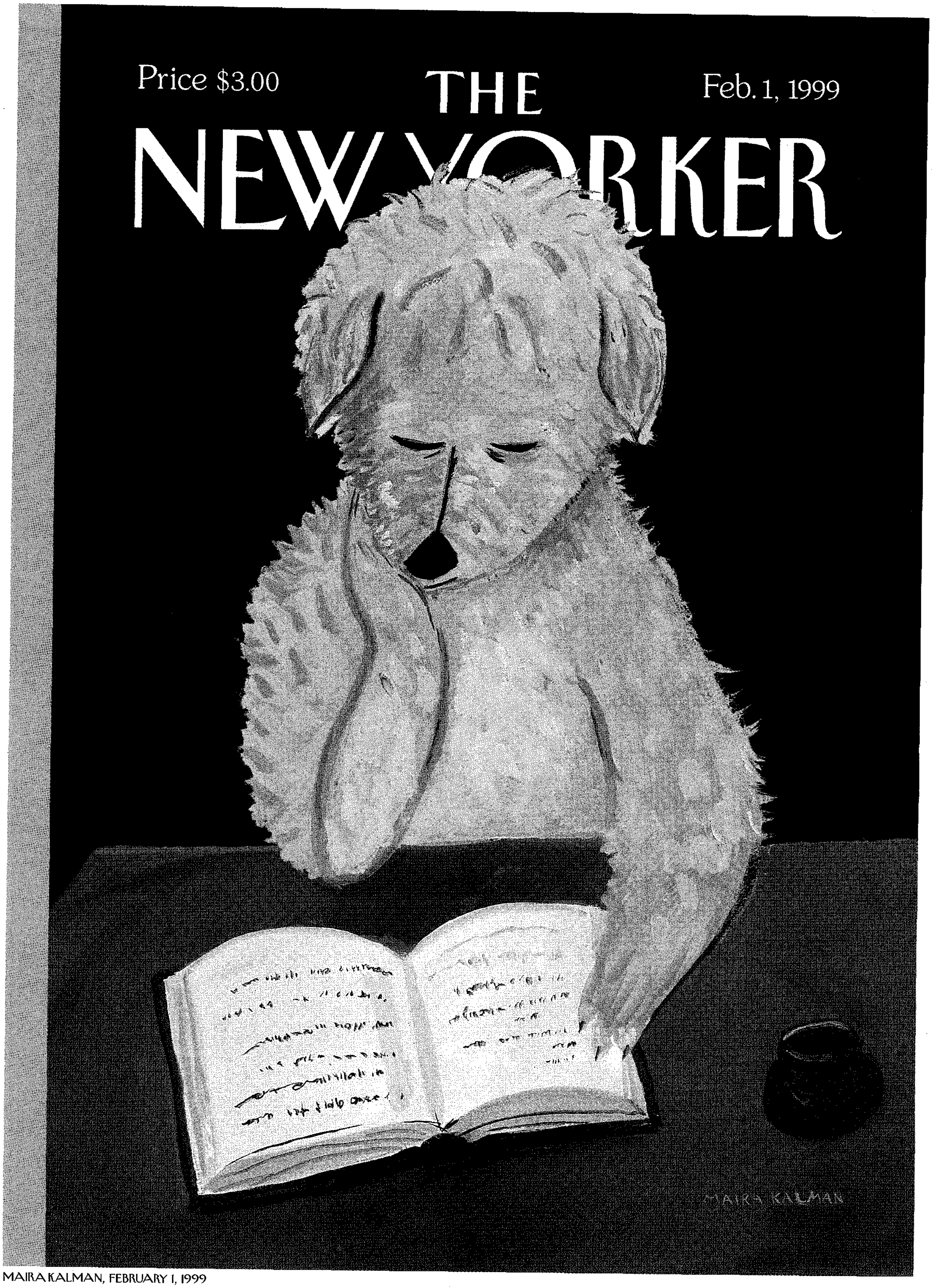
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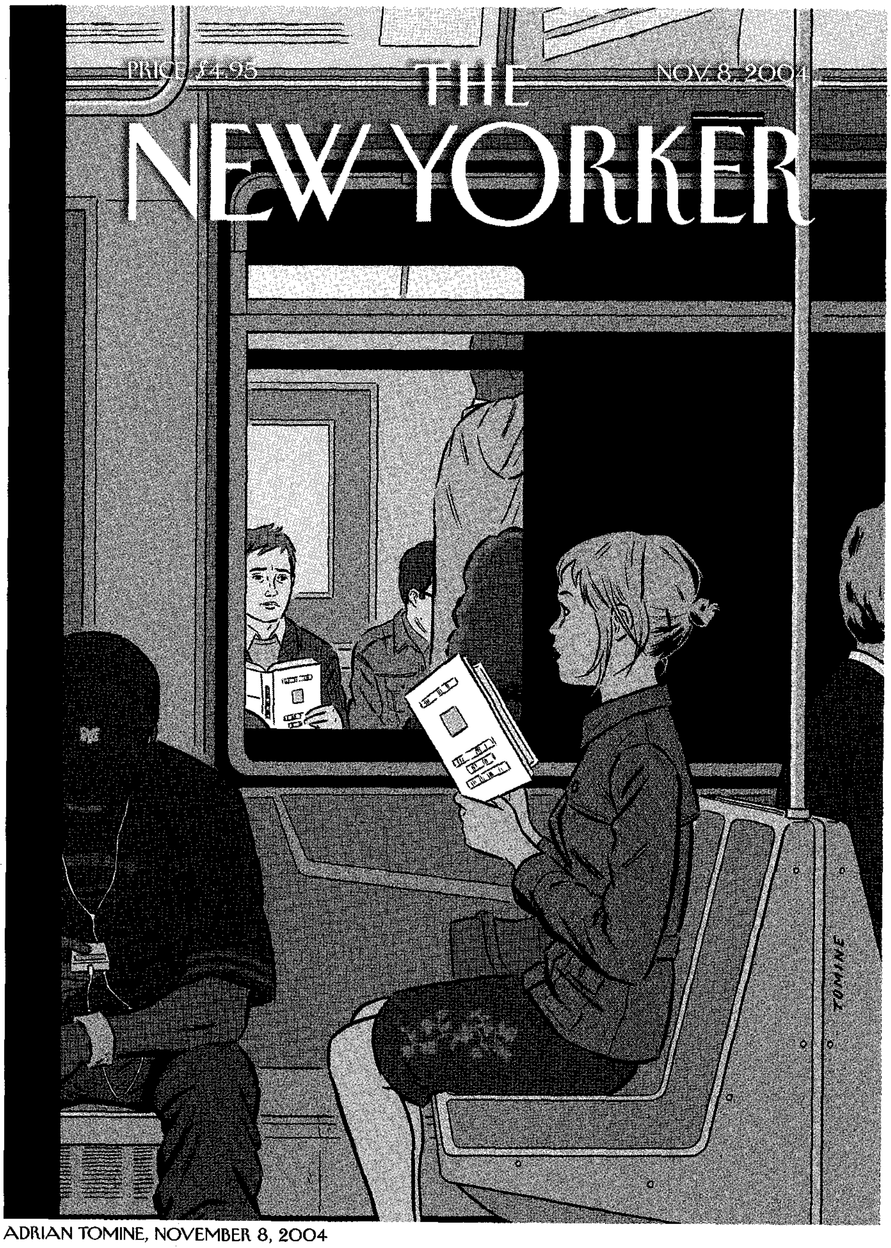
MAIRA KALMAN

MAIRA KALMAN, FEBRUARY 1, 1999

orous exception to this rule. The woman riding the train in Abner Dean's 1934 cover is a stereotypical dumb blonde, but in Adrian Tomine's 2004 update her modern counterpart, blond but no longer dumb, has found her soul mate, a stranger on a passing train, who is reading the same book. (Tomine's cover illustrates what most New Yorkers already know: that the most popular place to read is not the library but the subway.) Finally, there is the point made by Harry Bliss, on the one hand, and Maira Kalman and Philippe Petit-Roulet, on the other: reading may not be for the birds, but it is certainly for the dogs.

—*F. M.*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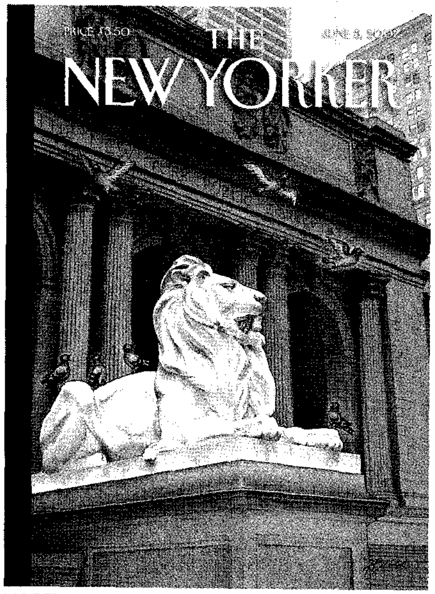
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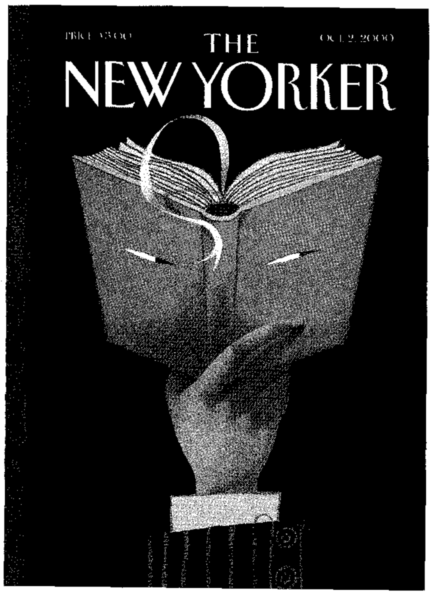
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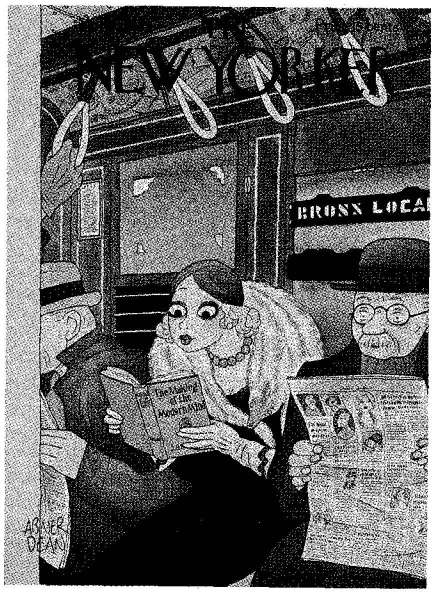
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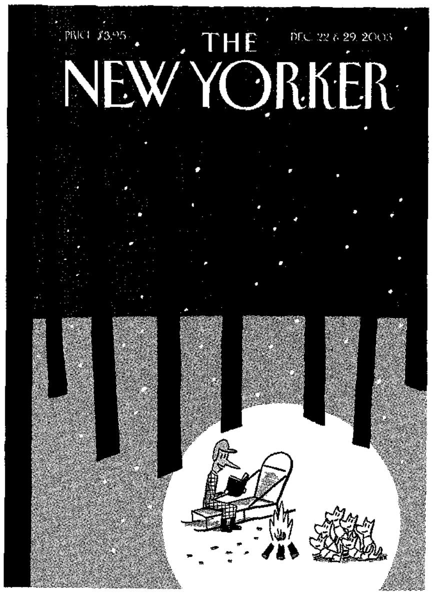
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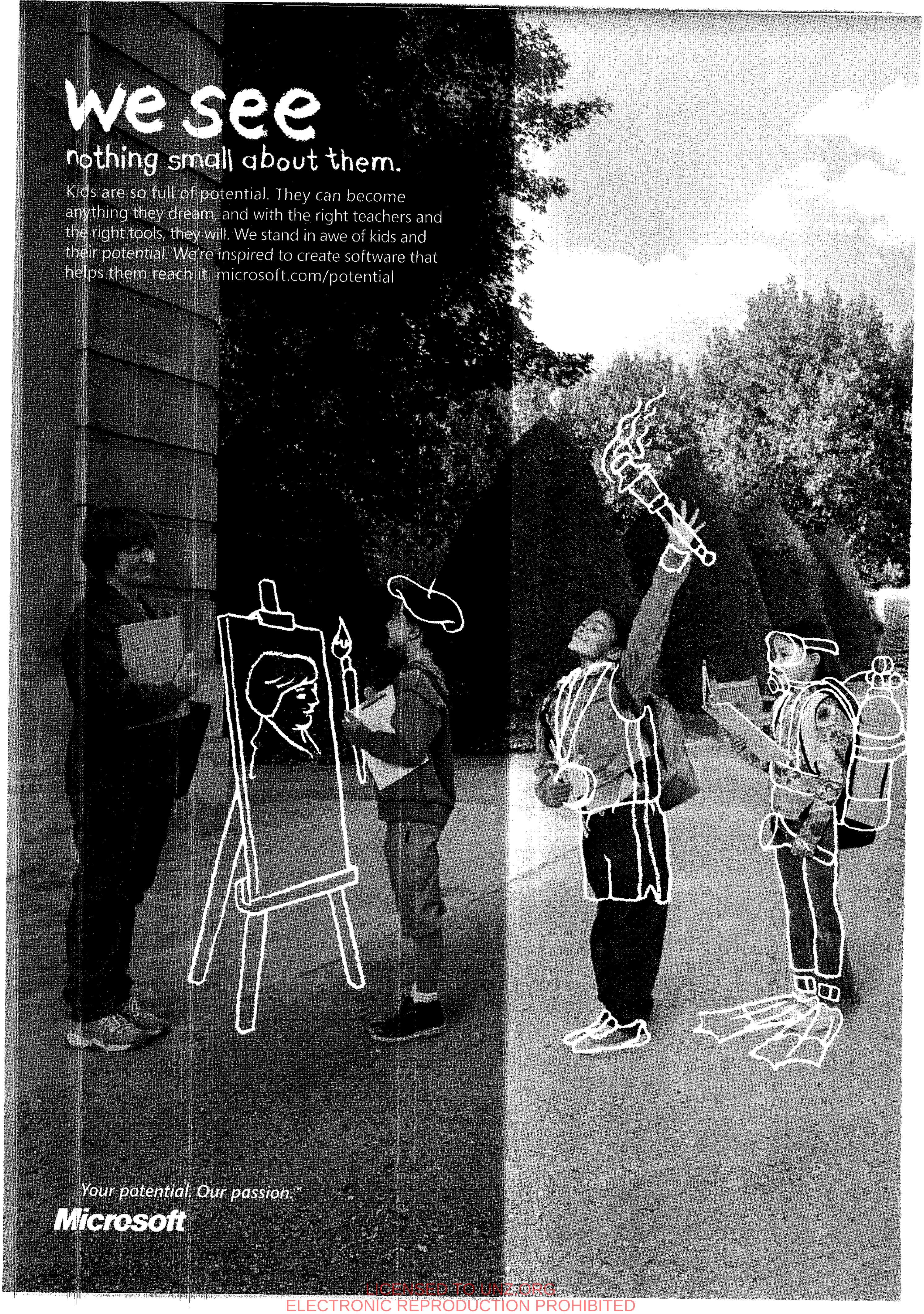

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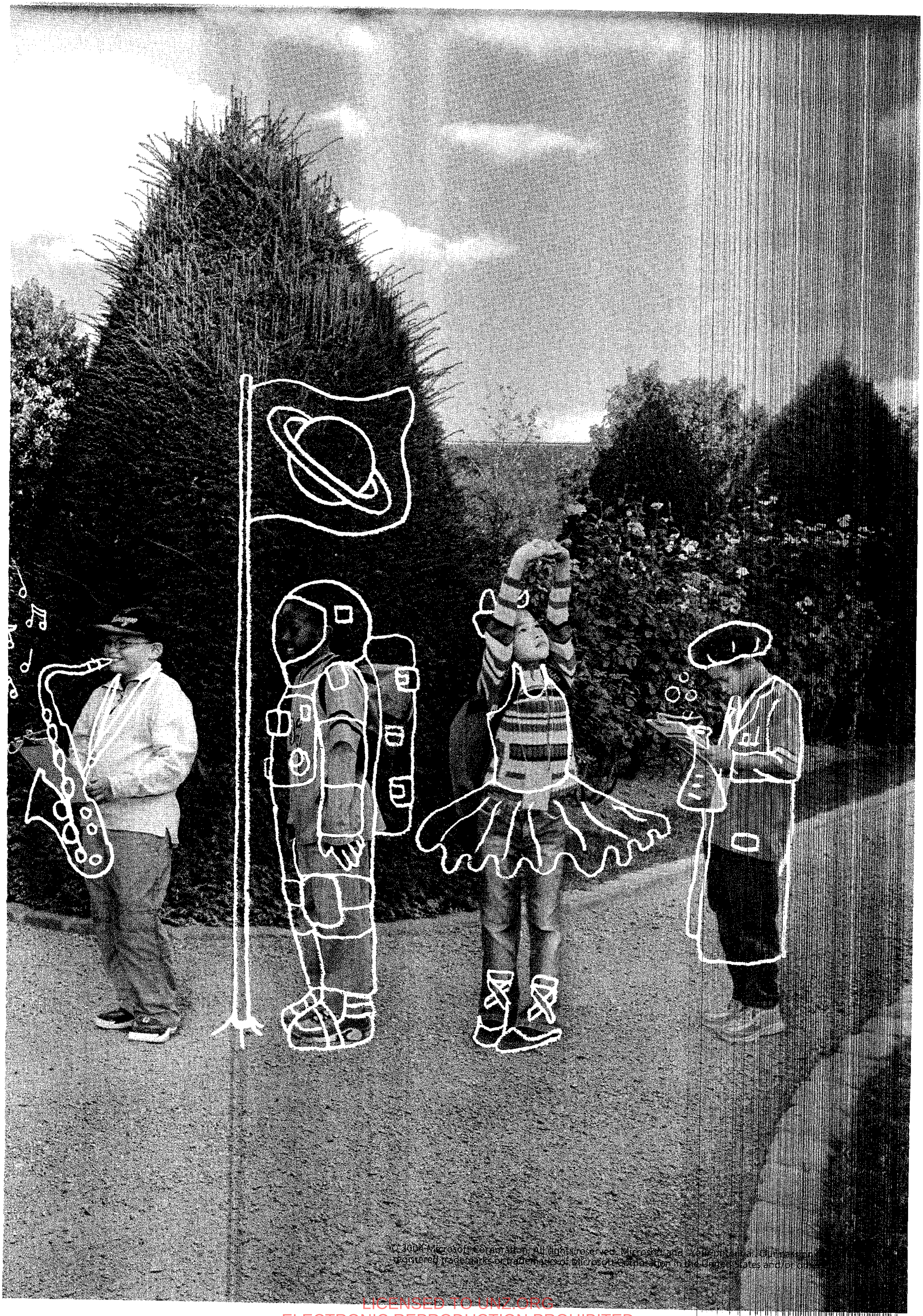

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PERSONAL HISTORY

ANDY

For E. B. White's readers and family, a sense of trust came easily.

BY ROGER ANGELL

Lately I have been missing my stepfather, Andy White, who keeps excusing himself while he steps out of the room to get something from his study or heads out the back kitchen door, on his way to the barn again. He'll be right back. I can hear the sound of that gray door—the steps there lead down into the fragrant connecting woodshed—as the lift-latch clicks shut. E. B. White died in 1985—twenty years ago, come October—and by "missing" I don't mean yearning for him so much as not being able to keep hold of him for a bit of conversation or even a tone of voice. In my mind, this is at his place in North Brooklin, Maine, and he's almost still around. I see his plaid button-down shirt and tweed jacket, and his good evening moccasins. One hand is holding a cigarette tentatively—he'll smoke it halfway down and then stub it out—and he turns in his chair to put his Martini back on the Swedish side table to his right. It must be about dinnertime. What were we talking about, just now? We were close for almost sixty years, and you'd think that a little back-and-forth—something more than a joke or part of an anecdote—would survive, but no. What's impossible to write down, soon afterward, is a conversation that comes easily.

One morning in Maine: Katharine and E. B. White (and Minnie) in the early fifties.

Here we are, instead, on a frigid December day in 1929, walking up a steep stretch of Pinckney Street, on Beacon Hill, in Boston. The narrow brick sidewalk is snowy in places, and the going is harder for Andy than it is for me, because he's wearing ice skates. He's been complaining—who can blame him—and finally he sits down on somebody's front stoop to pull off the skates, and goes on, snow or no snow, in his socks. We've been here on a family visit from New York to the Newberrys' house at 87 Myrtle Street—my Aunt Rosie (she's one of my mother's sisters) and Uncle John's place—and Andy and I brought our skates along, just in case. Christmas is two or three days away, and on a clear and cold afternoon he and I head down to Charles Street and then over to the frozen lake in the Public Garden. There may be a red-ball sign standing out on the ice, telling us it's safe to skate, but there's no place you can go to buy a ticket, and no shack with a stove inside, where you could keep warm while you lace up your skates. We find a park bench instead. Andy hides our shoes under a bush and we step down an embankment and sail away. Other skaters are here already—some of the men are in overcoats, along with kids in striped scarves and big mittens—but it's as if we had the place to ourselves. There are wintry trees and park lampposts with a different shape than the ones in Central Park, and though the sense of Boston is close at hand, we could almost be in the country. Wind has cleared patches and paths through snow for us to skate on. The ice is rough, with frozen ripples here and there to trip you up, but Andy and I are good skaters, and we laugh when we come to a curved bridge and, bending low, shoot under and out the other side. It's a great afternoon—right up to the moment when we come back to our bush and see that Andy's shoes are gone. I don't recall that we made a fuss or much of a search; this was hard times, the onset of the Depression, and even a poorly fitting pair of shoes was better than a handout or a hot meal for a lot of men just then.

Andy was shy and self-conscious—he was a slight man, never one to bluster his way through things—and I could see him turn his head away in embarrassment as people coming toward us down Beacon Street began to smile when they saw him tiptoeing along on his hockey skates. Sometimes after they'd gone by he stopped and bent half-double, laughing at himself. "'The Skater,'" he said, shaking his head. It was a relief for me to laugh, too. What came to me later—I was nine but prone to thought—was that this adventure would not have happened with my father. I'd done more skating with him, on rivers and ponds everywhere—he'd started me when I was small—but he'd have taken us home when we found there was no place to

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check our shoes. Or if he had lost his shoes somehow he'd have found a cab or made a phone call before ever walking a dozen blocks in his skates. Andy was ten years his junior, and younger than my mother, too. He was a grownup, but there was a readiness for play in him that lasted all his life. Luckily, I didn't need another father and that freed us up.

Andy makes light of the lost shoes in a tiny Notes and Comment piece he wrote for *The New Yorker* afterward, and I've remembered the day for boyish reasons—it was an adventure and it put me alone with someone I loved but didn't see all that much. Actually, the story is right up his alley. In "One Man's Meat," the celebrated collection of his essays published in 1942, he recalls his dreamy seventeen-year-old self at home in Mount Vernon, New York, in 1917, just before he entered Cornell as a freshman. He was thinking of a girl he had skated with the winter before, when "the air grew still and the pond cracked and creaked under our skates," and "the trails of ice led off into the woods, and the little fires burned along the shore. It was enough, that spring, to remember what a girl's hand felt like, suddenly ungloved in winter." The shift from the winter general to the sudden particular of the girl's hand is a White special, as is the self-deprecation. And pegging along on a sidewalk in skates was an embarrassment that he would have made more of in a piece later on and played out with relish, as he did so often in his writings, turning the awkward moment into a charming and then telling paragraph, even as he dwells on his fears. He was the most charming man I've known, and he got that side of himself into his writing, like everything else, without effort.

Another winter scene is coming—this one a half century later—but first it should be explained that E. B. White was a lifelong hypochondriac, perhaps world class, but not a solemn one. Munching a canapé on my porch in Maine one evening, he clapped one hand to his face in horror. We paused, drinks in midair. "Got anything for cheese in the *eye*?" he cried indignantly. The crisis passed and the moment was affectionately filed away, joining the deadly ant bite at the beach picnic, the bone in his upper spine that was almost surely pushing its way through his windpipe, the passing ulcer or descending thrombus, and the thousand-odd spoonfuls of soup or compote, or forkfuls of salad or soufflé that were suddenly halted and inspected midway to his mouth, with the same "Any *clams* in this?" A clam had poisoned him once—though I don't think I ever heard the meal or the mollusk named—and the cooks and hostesses of the world, including my mother, were out to lay him low again by the same means. No discussion followed a fresh alert. "Nope, no clams, Andy," someone would murmur, and the meal resumed. If your eye fell on him later, you might notice that he was chewing, as always, with his mouth a quarter or an eighth open, ready to discharge any skulking bivalve that had slipped through the lines. Another quirk of his, almost as familiar as his gray mustache or his easeful walk, was a persistent leftward twist of his head, a little adjustment of neck and spine repeated every minute or so, retesting a structure on the verge of collapse.

I never had the feeling that Andy worked on his worries. He wasn't exactly after attention, though that's what he got at the spectacular upper levels of his discomposure. In the winter of 1980, word came to my wife, Carol, and me in New York that a cherished Maine neighbor of ours, Catherine McCoy, had died. There would be a memorial in Blue Hill, early in January, and after discussion we agreed that Carol would fly up to Bangor while I stayed home with our ten-year-old son, John Henry. My mother had died three years earlier, and Andy was delighted by the unexpected visitor, though it was understood that he would not attend the ceremony. Public gatherings—and most private ones, as well—made him jumpy. For years he had passed up family weddings and graduations, town meetings, dedications and book awards, cocktail bashes and boat gams and garden parties. As his lit-

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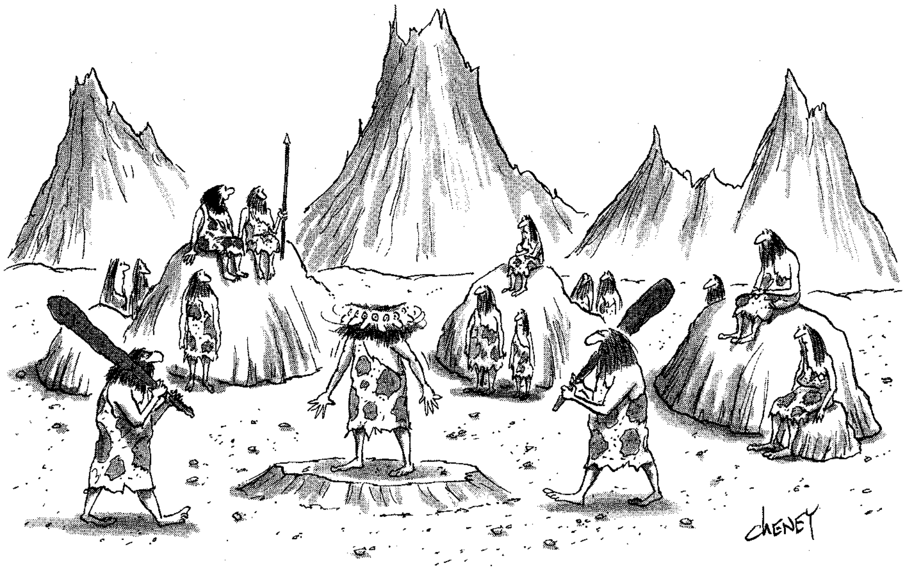


"This is always my favorite part of the sermon."

• •

erary reputation widened when he was in his forties and fifties, he did make it to a few select universities to receive honorary degrees, but despite prearranged infusions of sherry or Scotch he found the ceremonials excruciating. "So the old emptiness and dizziness and vapors seized hold of me," he writes to my mother after his *honoris causa* Ph.D. appearance at Dartmouth in 1948. "Nobody who has never had my peculiar kind of disability can understand the sheer hell of such moments, but there they are." And when the time came for the encomiums and the enrobing, there in the sunshine at Hanover, he went on, his hood—"white, quite big, and shaped like a loose-fitting horse collar"—became entangled with the honoree in the next seat, Ben Ames Williams: Andy's worst dreams come true. "When I got seated the thing was up over my face, as in falconry," he continues. "A fully masked Doctor of Letters, a headless poet." After that, he stayed home, even passing up an invitation in 1963 to go to Washington and receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Lyndon Johnson; the deed was consummated instead by a stand-in, Maine's Senator Edmund Muskie, in the office of the president of Colby College. Andy also skipped his wife's private burial in the Brooklin Cemetery, in July, 1977. None of us in the family expected otherwise or held this against him. And when his own memorial came, eight years later, I took the chance to remark, "If Andy White could be with us today he would not be with us today."

There would be no question of his accompanying Carol to Catherine McCoy's farewell at the Blue Hill Congregational Church—except that a considerable snowstorm blew in overnight, converting the two-lane Route 175 to a slithery corridor the next morning. Carol said she'd drive herself over, but he wouldn't hear of it; he'd drive her—he knew these winter roads. And so she found herself and the writhing public E.B.W. seated side by side near the front of the long church—the "Congo," in local parlance—while preliminary organ music fell about them and the rows filled up with stomping, de-muffling mourners. When the music subsided and the footfalls of the minister were heard, Andy leaned toward Carol and whispered, "I'm having a heart attack."

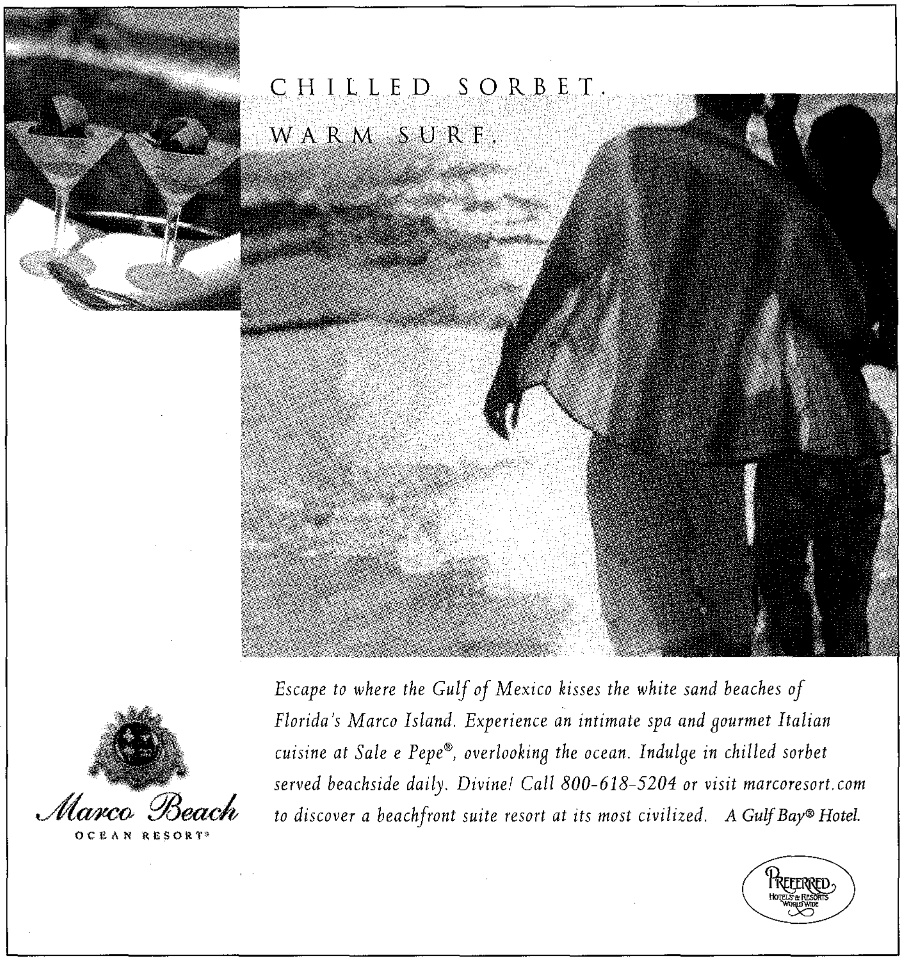
"I'm not leaving," she whispered back, and kept her gaze straight ahead while he rose, excusing himself, and, half-bending but not unobserved, made his way out of the row and back up the aisle and, at last, through a door into the vestibule. The service and the tributes went on lengthily, at least for Carol. Had she done the right thing? She had no idea what she would find after the benediction and the recessional were over—certainly not the sight of Andy stretched on his back on one of the vestibule benches, a Saxon king atop his sarcophagus, as he responded to the anxious questions of each departing neighbor. "A heart attack," he explained. "I had a heart attack." In time, he arose, bundled up, and drove her safely back to North Brooklin for drinks and a nice dinner.

My mother and Andy White got married in 1929, immediately after my parents' divorce, and though my sister and I were only weekend and summertime visitors with them after that, I soon felt as much at home at their place—on East Eighth Street and then East Forty-eighth Street, in New York, and then in Maine—as I was with my father the rest of the time. A fresh household sharpens attention, and one of the things I picked up was that sense of ease and play that Andy brought to his undertakings. Though subject to nerves, he possessed something like that invisible extra beat of time that great athletes show on the field. Dogs and children were easy for him because he approached them as a participant instead of a winner. In a family photograph, he is sitting astride a bench outside the garage door, in Maine, while he stirs up a dish of mash for his bantam hens. Blond John Henry, then about two years old, is standing close by, and they are looking into the dish with equal interest while Andy mixes and talks. When Andy, without his trying and almost without my noticing it, taught me how to sail or how to row or how to lure a flounder with a bit of periwinkle as bait and—in some part—how to write, ease seemed to be the whole trick. He let things emerge, like the time he unexpectedly put his nearly empty bottle of Pabst or Schlitz down on the carpet in front of his big dachshund, Fred, who sniffed about and soon found that by laying one paw on the neck he could tip the last of the beer toward the top of the bottle and lap it out. Then he ate the label.

When the Whites moved to a year-round residency in Maine, in 1938, we kept in touch by letters, as everyone did in those days, but also, I began to realize, through his writings. He'd given up the Comment page he wrote each week for

The New Yorker, and the eased deadlines and greater length of his monthly "One Man's Meat" column in *Harper's* suited the hours and bottomless concerns of a saltwater farmer with a hundred and fifty pullets, a dozen geese, twenty or thirty sheep, an editor wife (my mother had continued her work as a fiction and poetry editor with *The New Yorker* by long distance, with daily envelopes of galleys and proofs mailed back and forth between New York and Brooklin), a schoolboy son, Joel, and a full-time hired man. What he wrote about, along with the weather and the way to build a double-ended cedar scow for Joe and the way to keep a city rubber plant healthy with doses of "sheep-shit tea" (as it was known in the family, if not in print) and how to hook up a mooring with a chain so the tide will lift it free in the morning, was himself. The arrangement left room for his thoughts about the movies, automobile design, the railroads, taxation, domesticity, poetry, Florida trailer parks, and freedom. In 1937, a year before he began writing "One Man's Meat," Andy formally took a year off ("My Year" as he called it) to try—well, to try to become a serious writer. Nothing came of it, of course, but then the *Harper's* assignment came along and saved his life. He was self-conscious at first as a countryman—he is abashed as he catches himself crossing the barnyard with a paper napkin in his hand—but the demands of the work and his affinity for it soon dismissed such concerns and somehow put him in place as a writer. The Whites, with their well-staffed household and sophisticated occupations, would always be "from away," in Down East parlance, but no one in Brooklin who knew Andy ever took him for a gentleman farmer. When the war came, he even took on a cow—the first time he leads her out to the pasture, he writes, he feels "the way I did the first time I ever took a girl to the theatre"—and his production goals for 1942 were four thousand dozen eggs, ten pigs, and nine thousand pounds of milk.

I was away much of the time at boarding school and then at Harvard, and then elsewhere as a soldier, but the sense of home and informal but intimate attachment I got from Andy's writings was even more powerful than it was for his other readers. Reading him



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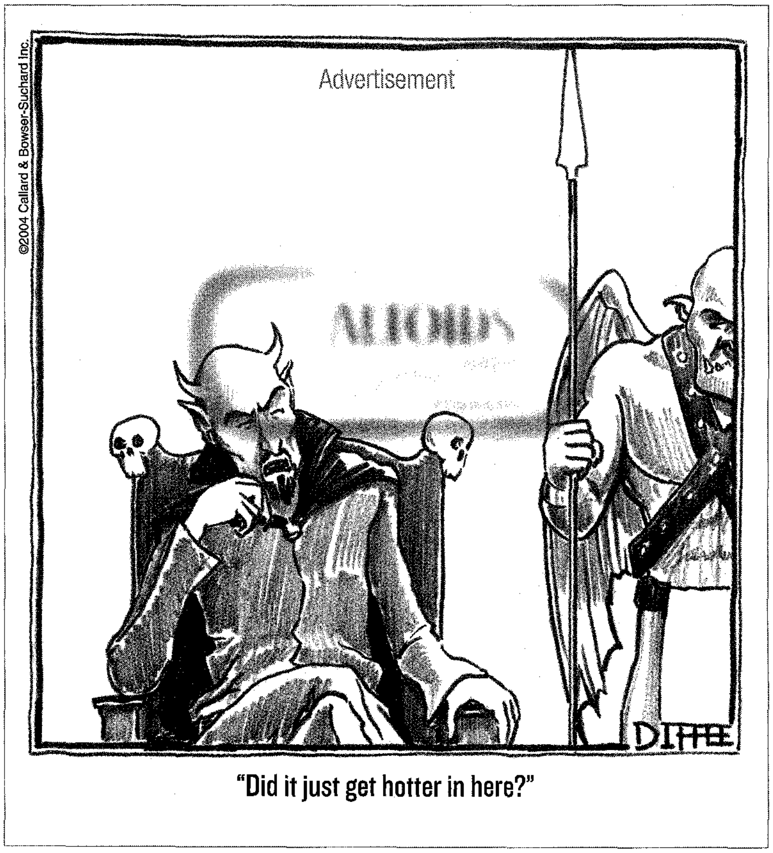

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"All right, which one of you fiddled with the thermostat?"

brought him to me almost in person, as it still does in a 1955 passage about driving on U.S. 1, in Maine:

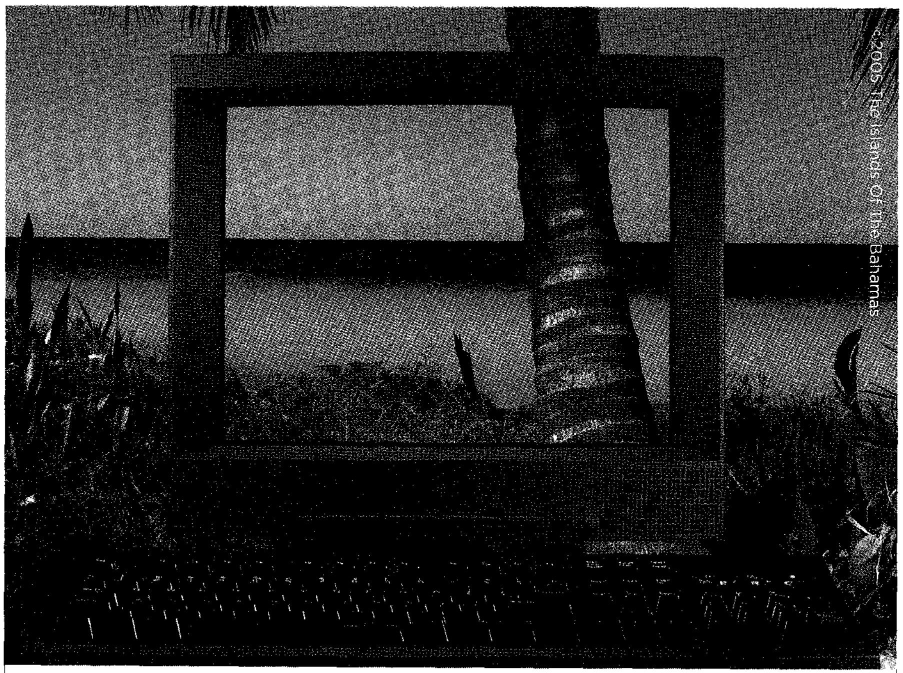
> Like highways everywhere it is a mixed dish: Gulf and Shell, bay and gull, neon and sunset, cold comfort and warm, the fussy façade of a motor court right next door to the pure geometry of an early-nineteenth-century clapboard house with barn attached. You can certainly learn to spell "moccasin" while driving into Maine, and there is often little else to do except steer and avoid death. Woods and fields occur everywhere, creeping to within a few feet of the neon and the court, and the experienced traveler into this land is always conscious that just behind the garish roadside stand, in its thicket of birch and spruce, stands the well-proportioned deer; just beyond the overnight cabin, in the pasture of granite and juniper, trots the perfectly designed fox. . . . The Maine man does not have to penetrate in depth to be excited by his coastal run; its flavor steals into his consciousness with the first ragged glimpse of properly textured woodland, the first whiff of punctually drained cove.

The moccasin joke survives—I think of it every year on the same stretch of highway, where the juniper and the foxes are scarcer now and the deer and the neon more prevalent. Reading the passage as a writer, I am struck by its simplicity and complexity, by that "punctually" and "barn attached" and the quick, sentence-closing "fox" and "cove." What I feel for its author comes not just from my knowledge of him at the table or twitchy behind the wheel but from a sense of trust. He has looked at the roadside grunge and granite with the same eyes I do, and he does not labor for reference or add a chunk of scholarship to give them meaning; he waits for the connection—that extra moment—and delivers it with grace. I am included: this must be my thought, too, elegant as it has become. His editor William Shawn, writing after Andy's death, called him the most companionable of writers, but added that "renowned as his writing was for its simplicity and its clarity, his mind constantly took surprising turns, and his peculiar mixture of seriousness and humor could not have failed to astonish even him."

The other sentence-closer in the passage is "death," and Andy must have ceased in time to be astonished at how often the theme and thought recurred in his writing. It runs all through his sweetly comical piece "Death of a Pig," in which he tries ineffectually to deal with the crisis of a young pig of his who has stopped eating. Castor oil doesn't help, nor does his own sense of "personal deterioration," or the ministrations of Fred, who accompanies him on trips down the woodpath through the orchard to the pigyard, and also makes "many professional calls on his own." The pig dies, nothing can be done about it, and it is the profusion of detail—his feeling the ears of the ailing pig "as you might put your hand on the forehead of a child," and the "beautiful hole, five feet long, three feet wide, three feet deep" that is dug for the pig among alders and young hackmatacks, at the foot of an apple tree—that makes its death unsentimental and hard to bear.

The "d"-word also ends two famous essays of his, "Once More to the Lake" and "Here Is New York," arriving without warning in the first one—a piece about taking his young son to a family summer camp where he himself often used to go as a kid. Everything there is the same, or almost—the middle lane, where the horse used to walk, has vanished from the road through the meadow—with the customarily spectacular afternoon thunderstorm thrown in. When it's over and his boy is putting on his wet bathing suit for another dip, "I watched him, his hard little body, skinny and bare, saw him wince slightly as he pulled up around his vitals the small, soggy, icy garment. As he buckled the swollen belt suddenly my groin felt the chill of death." I was a young man when I first read this, and remember finding the thought self-indulgent and exaggerated, almost a mistake, but this was before I'd begun to feel the brevity and sense of poignant loss that, from the first day, attend our meticulously renewed American vacations.

"Here Is New York," written in 1948, was widely rediscovered in the weeks just after September 11th, because of its piercing vision. Reading the piece now—a revisiting of the pulsing and romantic city he knew and worked in during his late twenties and early thirties—you look for death at the end, since he has just mentioned that a small flight of planes could now bring down the great shining structure in a moment, but he almost appears to have given up on the idea. Has he forgotten the point? It arrives at the tail end of the last sentence, in the famously reversed final phrase: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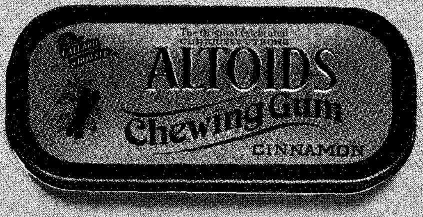

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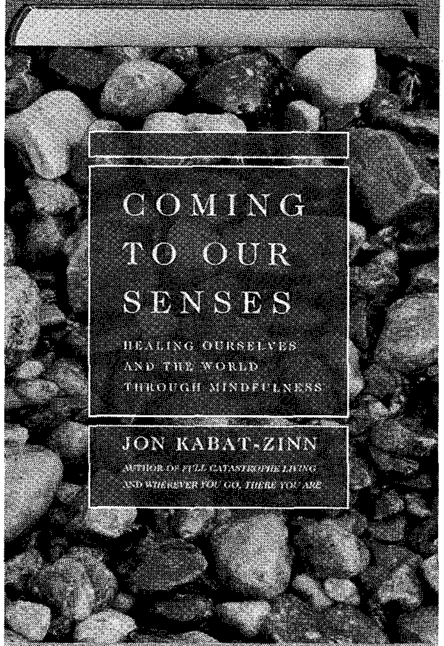

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"this city, this mischievous and marvelous monument which not to look upon would be like death." Losing New York is possible, but not holding on to the thought of it—which is all we may have in the end—much worse.

Andy White and my mother wove daily illness and incipient pain into their routines and conversations and their letters as they grew older. Her health was worse than his—she suffered from an exfoliating skin disease, went through a spinal-fusion operation and another dangerous procedure to clear a carotid artery, and endured painful bone deterioration in her old age, as a result of steroid treatments for the dermatosis—but if in the end she won their amazing sick-off, she took no pleasure in it and talked of his symptoms with the same concern and detail as her own. Their conversation became studded with lovingly enunciated medical reference: tachycardia, ileitis, the ethmoid sinuses. My older daughter, Callie, believes that what was most surprising about the Whites' joint hypochondria was its energy; they were falling apart, they felt terrible, but they weren't depressed. The narcissism and intimacy of their exchanged symptoms could be infuriating, since it excluded everyone else, but it was so dopey that you laughed at it and forgave them. When you turned up at their house after an absence, they'd ask you about your kids and your job and your recent doings, and almost in the same breath bring up a lingering migraine or this morning's fresh back spasm. Someone in the family—someone who'd been reading about astronomy lately and remembered the "red shift" phenomenon as a measure of radiation and distance—named this the "White shift," and it stuck.

All this, as I've said, showed itself late in their marriage, but a moment's effort can bring back for me the way things were at home in better days, a couple of decades back—say on a late morning just after the mail has arrived. Their studies face each other across the narrow front hall, with the doors always open. My mother, in soft tweeds and a pale sweater, sits at her cherrywood desk, one leg tucked under her, with a lighted Benson & Hedges in one hand and a brown soft pencil in the other as she works her way down a page of Caslon-type galleys, with her tortoiseshell glasses down on her nose. Her desk is littered with papers and ashes and eraser rubbings. Across the hall, Andy sits up at his pine desk, facing her; a paste pot and a jar of pencils and some newspaper clips are arrayed before him, next to an old "in" basket, and a struggling winter sunlight touches the white organdy curtains by the north window. There are messages to himself taped up on the bookcase behind, near the worn stacks of the Encyclopedia, some bound volumes of *The New Yorker*, and a trusty Roget's. The wallpaper here, curling a bit in the corners now, is made of connected blue-and-tan Coast and Geodetic Survey maps of Penobscot Bay, from the hills of Rockland in one corner, narrowing to a strip above the fireplace mantel, and all the way around to the waters near Mt. Desert Rock, in the other. Andy reads a passage aloud from today's letter from Frank Sullivan or his brother Stanley or a grain merchant in Ellsworth, and my mother laughs, scarcely lifting her eyes from the page. Soon the noises of her typing out another letter to Harold Ross or Gus Lobrano are joined by the slower clatter of his Underwood: a New England light industry is again in full gear, pouring out its high-market daily product, and the labor force, for the moment, seems content. Soon it will be lunchtime.

To me, the Whites' later concern with their health was a substitute joint effort, more loving than angry, and constituted a fresh form of intimacy as the two grew older. Andy missed the joy and youth that he had known in my mother and the passion that she had brought to her work as an editor, an obsessive gardener, and a non-stop letter-writer; once he told me how he mourned the day when she decided that she'd have to give up her evening Martini or Old-Fashioned. We in the family often speculated that Andy's hypochondria wasn't a way to stay close to her as much as fear of death in another form: if he could intercept each twinge and malaise as it arrived and bring it squirming to the light, then the ultimate event might yet be forestalled. But this is too easy. Rather, I've come to believe that his anxieties were a neurotic remnant of childhood. He was the last child of affectionate but older parents—his father, Samuel White, a piano-company executive, was forty-five when he was born and his mother, Jessie, forty-one. There were two prior brothers and three sisters; the oldest sibling, a sister named Marion, was eighteen years older than he was, and the youngest, Lillian, already a five-year-old. There seems to be no dark family event to seize upon, but one can imagine that a cough or a skinned knee or a passing stomach ache would have brought a rush of attention to young En (as he was called then) amid the daily news and doings of so many vibrant elders.

What is certain is the way that writing about death became a strength for him, and brought a lasting power in his best work. No one who feared death could have written the end of "Stuart Little," in which the hero-mouse goes off in search of the heroine, a bird named Margalo, who has flown away "without saying anything to anybody." But Stuart is also a romantic, like his creator, and interrupts his search for Margalo to invite a young girl he has met, Harriet Ames—she is just his size—to a picnic. He plans it carefully, but nothing goes right. The day is cloudy, Stuart has a headache, and some idle boys smash the souvenir birchbark canoe in which he means to take her for a paddle. He is disconsolate, and, when Harriet can't cheer him up, she leaves.

The first sentence of "Stuart Little," to be sure, is just as surprising as its shadowed endings—the fact that the Littles' second child, on arrival, is a mouse, not a boy. White never explains the anomaly, and simply gets on with the story, but some critics and teacher-parent groups—and Anne Carroll Moore, the retired but still formidable children's librarian at the New York Public Library—were collectively aghast. Harold Ross, who read everything, stuck his head into Andy's office one afternoon and said, "God damn it, White, at least you could have had him adopted." The author and his readers—kids and their read-aloud elders—stayed calm, however, and "Stuart Little" sold a hundred thousand copies in the first fifteen months after publication.

Andy was not mouselike, but in these pages he is ready for love, though rueful about the results. In life, he was intensely, almost manically, domestic but always ready to fall a little in love, without the plans or bother of a full affair. Pretty girls, with brains and laughter, entranced him. One of them, a *New Yorker* assistant named Maryan Fox, by a later coincidence became a sister-in-law of mine. He also admired Susy Waterman, the wife of a Maine neighbor, Stan Waterman, and felt that she would be the perfect narrator for the Pathways of Sound recording of "Charlotte's Web"—an assignment he took on himself in the end. For a long time, there was a Steinway baby-grand piano tucked in a corner of Andy's study in Maine, and I can still hear him playing and singing the verse of a lilting old song—did he perhaps write and compose it himself?

How often in the greening spring,
'Neath bough and bank reclining
[I can't re-mem-ber this next line]
And gay young girls declining . . .

On another day, he contrived an epochal whine, murmuring to Carol that he always came in third in my mother's heart: first there was *The New Yorker*, then me (me, Roger), and then, way down the line somewhere, himself. "Are you crazy!" she cried. "How can you say such a thing? You're always first with her—there's nobody else. Then the magazine and then all the rest of us. Everybody knows this."

Death was a more reliable companion. There is not even a concealing metaphor by the time "Charlotte's Web" comes along, in 1952, seven years after "Stuart": a great short novel that begins with "Where's Papa going with that ax?" and ends, or just about, when Charlotte, the spider, describes her coming death to the disbelieving young pig Wilbur, whom she has saved from that axe. Then comes the line—experienced teachers or reading-aloud parents check to make sure that the Kleenex is handy—"No one was with her when she died."

Andy showed class, that pause again, in waiting to write "Charlotte's Web" until he had the country stuff in it down by heart. He knew how geese sounded when they were upset, and on what day in the fall the squashes and pumpkins needed to be brought in and put on the barn floor—which is to say that he'd still be himself in writing about it, and would not put in a word that might patronize his audience. He must have known as the chapters emerged that this would be his masterpiece, but it would not occur to him to feel uneasy that his best book was for children. Money and celebrity

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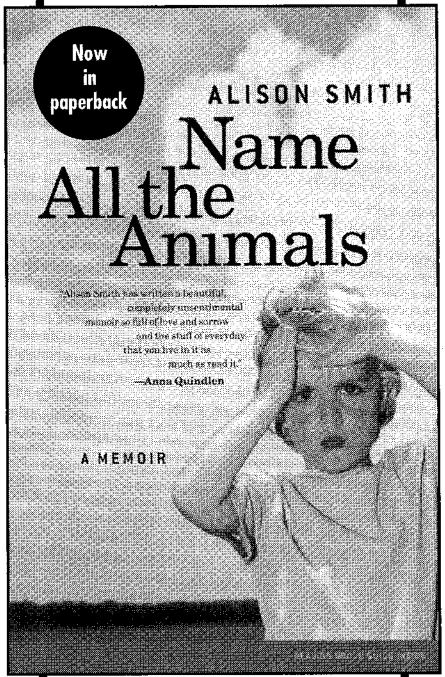
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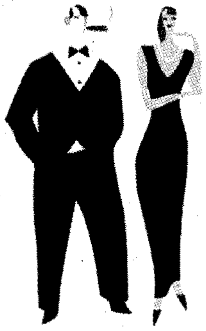

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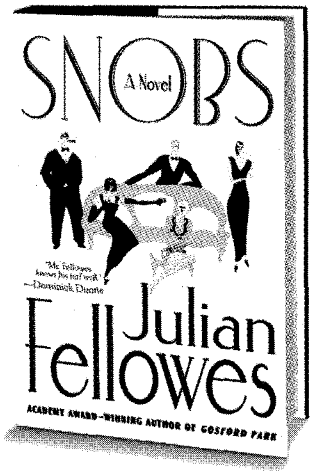
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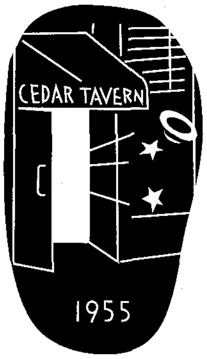
were not much on his mind. When his old friend James Thurber died, he wrote that he'd known him "before blindness hit him, before fame hit him." Andy also turned down a Book-of-the-Month Club offer for a later book, "The Second Tree from the Corner," because he did not want to delay its publication until it suited the promotional plans of the B.O.M. He wrote an apology to his publisher, Cass Canfield, for the loss of the promised extra revenue, in which he said, "There are other things in life besides twenty thousand dollars—although not many."



It's my belief—I can't prove it—that there are still readers and writers who feel a debt to E. B. White because of the sparkle and directness they found in a few lines or passages he wrote decades ago. Some of them, to be sure, were third graders who were encouraged by their teachers to write him in North Brooklin, asking whether Stuart ever found Margalo, or what became of Wilbur in the fullness of age: these letters came in by the bagful, and in time Andy had to turn over the task of replying to others. Readers also remember the power of his pieces on freedom and the Constitution—his 1947 "Party of One" letters to the New York *Herald Tribune*, for instance, which took the paper briskly to task when it supported the blacklisting of the Hollywood Ten and others who refused to answer questions about their loyalty or past political affiliations. The *Trib* didn't back down, and wrote that members of "the party of one" were "nearly always as destructive as they have been valuable." White's reply, which pointed out that "a difference of opinion became suddenly a mark of infamy," won a fan letter back from Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter.

White's gift to writers is clarity, which he demonstrates so easily in setting down the daily details of his farm chores: the need to pack the sides of his woodshed with sprucebrush against winter; counterweighting the cold-frame windows, for easier operation; the way the wind is ruffling the surface of the hens' water fountain. Clarity is the message of "The Elements of Style," the handbook he based on an early model written by Will Strunk, a professor of his at Cornell, which has helped more than ten million writers—the senior honors candidate, the rewriting lover, the overburdened historian—through the whichy thicket. "Write in a way that comes naturally," it pleads. "Do not explain too much." Write like White, in short, and his readers, finding him again and perhaps absorbing in the process something of that steely modesty, may sense as well the uses of patience in waiting to discover what kind of writer will turn up on their page, and finding contentment with that writer's life.

He was a demanding worker. He rewrote the first page of "Charlotte's Web" eight times, and put the early manuscript away for several months, "to let the body heat out of it." Then he wrote the book again, enlarging the role of the eight-year-old girl, Fern, at the center of its proceedings. He was the first writer I observed at work, back in my early teens. Each Tuesday morning, he disappeared into his study after breakfast to write his weekly Comment page for *The New Yorker*—a slow process, with many pauses between the brief thrashings of his Underwood. He was silent at lunch and quickly went back to his room to finish the piece before it went off to New York in the afternoon mailbag, left out in the box by the road. "It's no good," he often said morosely afterward. But when the new issue turned up the next week the piece was good—unstrained and joyful, a snap to read. Writing almost killed you, and the hard part was making it look easy.

What's been left out of my account, of course, is most of a life: his son, Joel, and Joel's wife, Allene, three grandchildren—all grown now, with kids and life stories of their own—and the Brooklin Boat Yard, where Joe built a career and earned a reputation as a master boat designer and builder that matched or continued his father's as a writer. The Whites' pasture isn't here, sloping past the woodlot toward the shore, with the shapes of Herriman Point and then Mt. Desert coming clear beyond as the morning fog thins, nor is Fiddler Bayou, on Siesta Key, Florida, where the Whites passed so many winters. My mind, still in Maine, takes in

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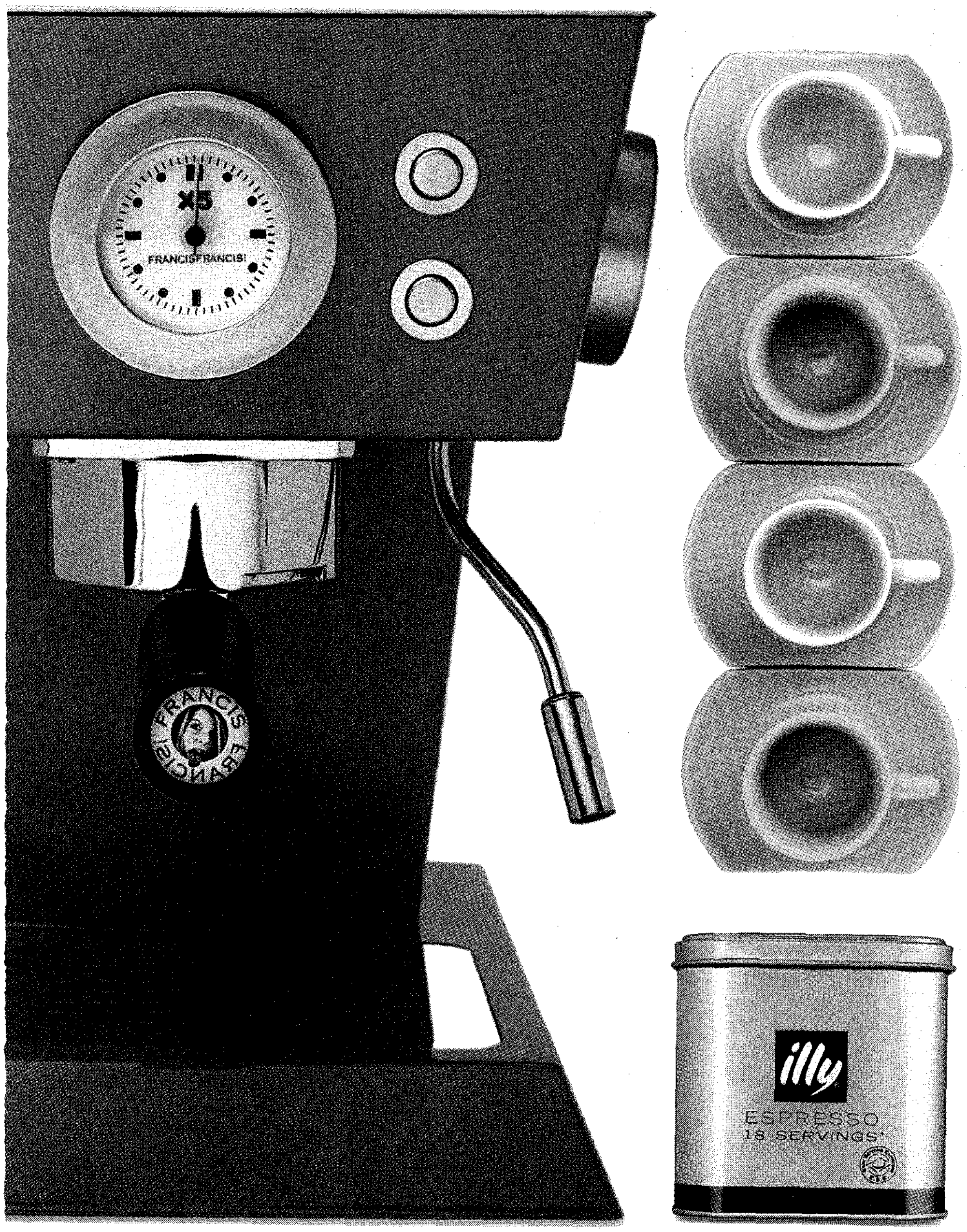

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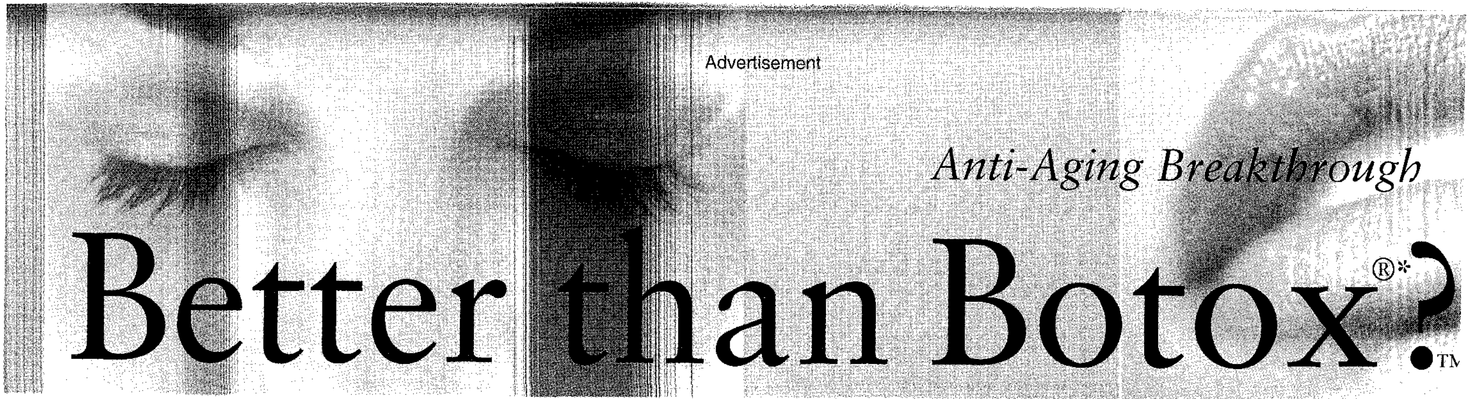

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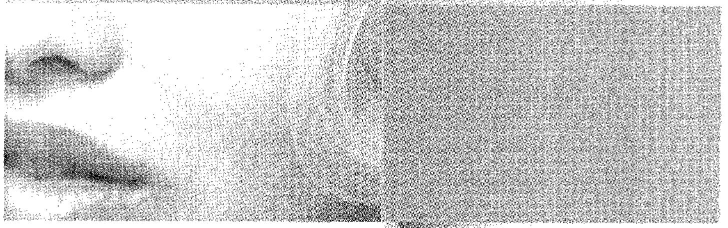

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Although StriVectin-SD's functional components were already backed by clinical trials documenting their ability to visibly reduce the depth, length, discoloration and roughness of existing stretch marks, the success of StriVectin-SD as an anti-wrinkle cream was "dumb luck," says Gina Gay, spokesperson for Klein-Becker®, StriVectin-SD's exclusive distributor.

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Dr. Daniel B. Mowrey, Klein-Becker's Director of Scientific Affairs, says, "Clearly, people were seeing results, but we didn't have a scientific explanation as to why this wrinkle-reduction was occurring. However, based on the incredibly positive reports, I started using it myself — applying StriVectin to my face after shaving." Dr. Mowrey adds, "On a personal note, my wife tells me I haven't looked this good in years."

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Then, on Tuesday, July 2, 2002, at a meeting of the 20th World Congress of Dermatology in Paris, France, a series of studies detailing the superior wrinkle-reducing properties of a patented oligo-peptide (called Pal-KTTKS) versus retinol, vitamin C, and placebo, on "photo-aged skin" was presented.[1,2] "As luck would have it," Dr. Mowrey states, "the wrinkle-reducing oligo-peptide tested in the breakthrough clinical trials turned out to be a key ingredient in the StriVectin cream."

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Better yet, at the 2-month halfway point, the peptide solution thickened skin nearly 1.5 times faster than retinol, and without the inflammation retinol often causes in sensitive skin. As was expected, the results of the remaining studies confirmed that the Pal-KTTKS solution's effectiveness at reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles far exceeded both vitamin C and placebo.

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Study References:

[1] PO438 "Relevance of antiwrinkle treatment of a peptide: 4 months clinical double blind study vs excipient." 20th World Congress of Dermatology (60 subjects, 4 mos.)

[2] PO179 "Pentapeptide offers improvement in human photoaged facial skin." 20th World Congress of Dermatology (204 subjects, 14 weeks).

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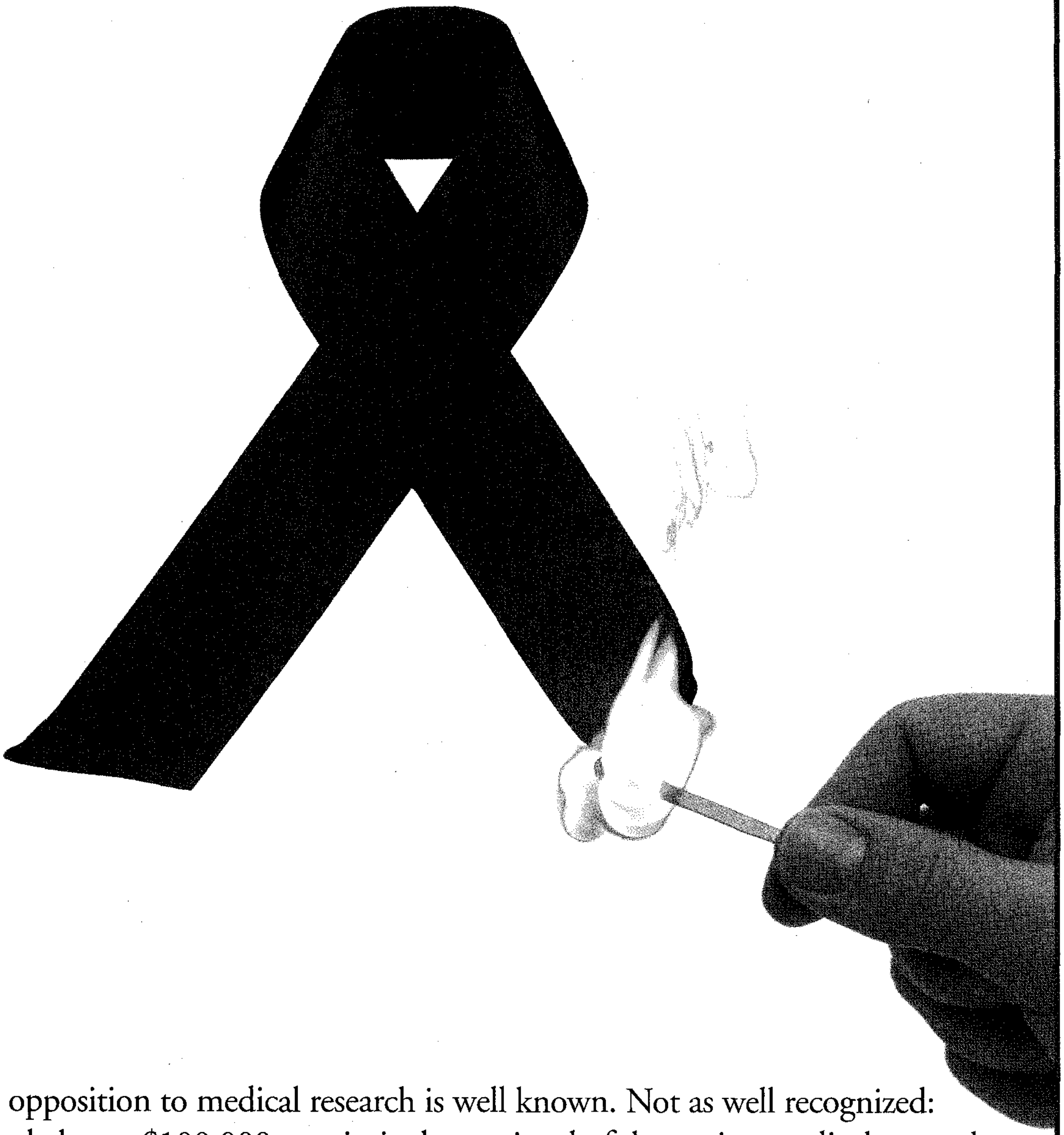

PETA's violent opposition to medical research is well known. Not as well recognized: PETA has funneled over $100,000 to criminals convicted of destroying medical research and firebombing scientific laboratories in the name of "animal liberation."

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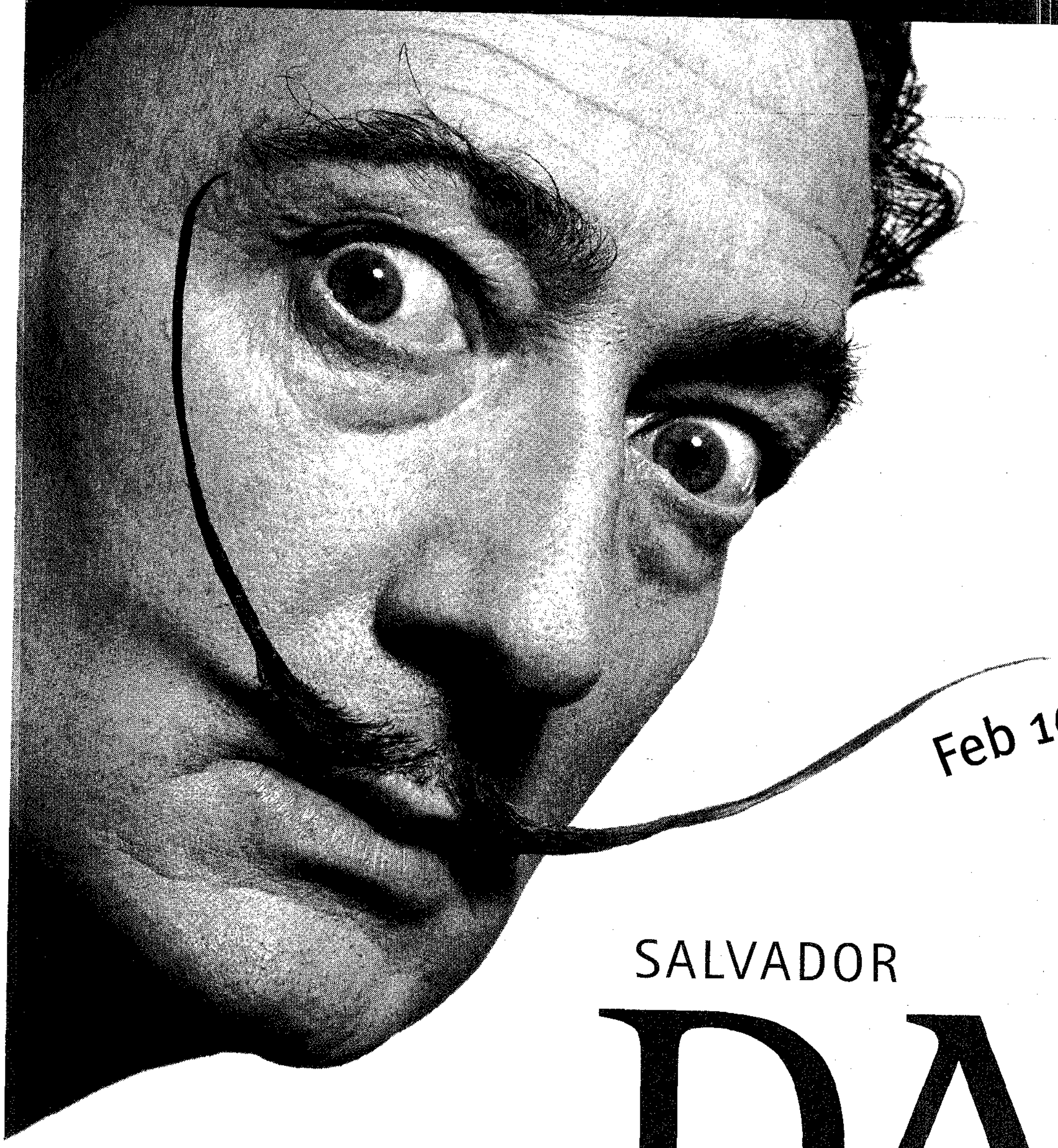

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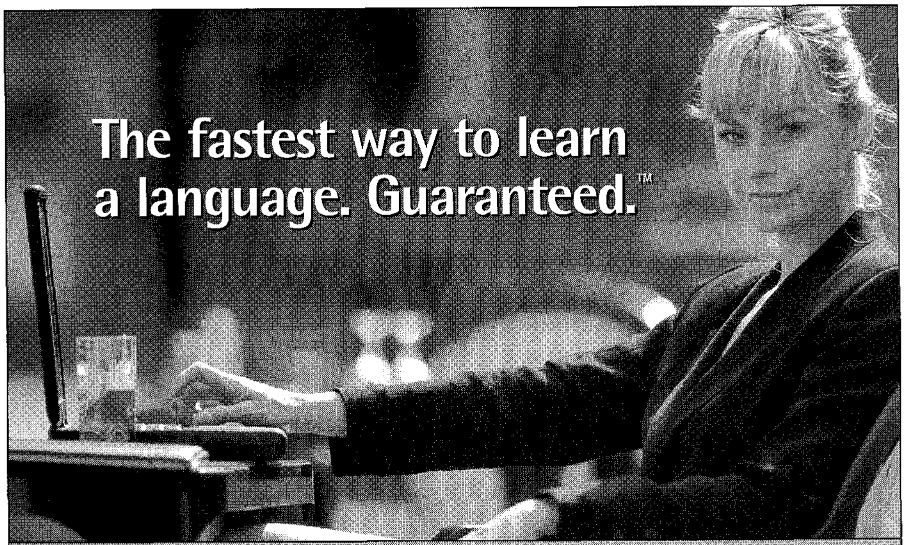
the rubbly shore of Allen Cove, and the redolent boathouse, its surfaces softened with age, where we changed our clothes before swimming, and where Andy took himself, some days, to write or to work on his Newsbreaks selections for the magazine. Andy, getting ready to swim on a morning when the icy incoming tide has been warmed a fraction by its journey over mudflats, wades out until the water reaches his knees, then unfurls his old Abercrombie & Fitch thermometer and flings it out to the end of its twine tether. If the temperature is bearable—I think the red line stands at sixty-four degrees—he shakes his head and commits himself to the shallow deep.

Many in the family, including my children, have their own lasting and complex attachments to Andy and the Whites' place. My daughter Alice, at about ten—an age when she'd read and been read "Charlotte's Web" over and over again—was shocked to learn that a young pig in residence in an enclosure to the southwest of the garage would be converted to ham and bacon shortly after her departure in September. She worked late that evening, crayoning a large replica of Garth Williams's "SOME PIG!" drawing in the book—the miracle web that saves Wilbur—and had me drive her back to the Whites' that night, so she could secretly thumbtack it to the side of the pen. The agrarian Andy was startled but unmoved, and the pig went to his smoked reward on schedule.

Others in or around the Whites' house are missing as well—Henry Allen, Edith Candage, Shirley Cousins, Tink Hutchinson, Howard Pervear. Andy's lobsterman neighbor Charlie Henderson. Harold Ross—yes, Harold Ross, the magazine's founder and editor—who probably never made it to the Whites' place but who, right up until his death, in 1951, was so much a part of their daily thoughts and mealtime conversation that I sometimes almost saw him sitting at the table across from me, with his hunched shoulders and that gap in his teeth. Henry Lawson, Joe and Tooey Wearn, Russell Wiggins, Dottie Hayes. Fifty years of Brooklin friends and neighbors, who all knew or almost knew Andy, and respected his emphatic privacy. (When he was old, Brooklin townspeople would turn away pilgrim tourists who'd come all this distance to visit the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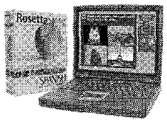

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shrine. "The E. B. White place? Well, it's hard to say how you'd get there from here. Anyway, I don't think he's around right now.") Sometimes, away for months on end, I felt in danger of falling out of touch, but then another letter from Andy would arrive, like this one from June 24, 1964: "I'm the father of two robins and this has kept me on the go lately. They were in a nest in a vine on the garage and had been deserted by their parents, and without really thinking what I was doing I casually dropped a couple of marinated worms into their throats as I walked by a week ago Monday. This did it. They took me on with open hearts and open mouths, and my schedule became extremely tight. I equipped myself with a 12" yellow bamboo stick, split at one end like a robin's bill, and invented a formula: hamburg, chicken mash, kibbled worm, and orange juice. Worms are hard to come by because of the drought, but I dig early and late and pay my grandchildren a penny a worm. The birds are now fledged and are under the impression that they know how to fly. When I come out of the house at 6 A.M. they come streaming at me from bush and tree, trying for a landing on shoulder or cap, usually overshooting me in the fog and bringing up against a wall. This exhausts them and me." (The stimulating "Letters of E. B. White," out of print for some time, will reappear next year, in a new and updated printing, edited by his granddaughter Martha White.)

My mother died in 1977, and Andy stayed on alone in the house for the rest of his life. Well, not entirely alone. As he grew older, he began to spoil himself a little, and why not. Sometimes when he was having a bad spell with his head he would check himself into the Blue Hill Hospital for two or three days, until he felt better. He liked a meal out now and then, at the Blue Hill Inn, sometimes with company and just as often alone. He took drives in the afternoon with Ethel Howard, the wife of a Sedgwick garageman, whose conversation he enjoyed; and had occasional visits from Corona Machemer, a Harper & Row editor who had worked with him on late collections of his works. He gave up sailing the sturdy twenty-foot sloop Martha, named for the same granddaughter, which Joel had built and rigged for use by a cautious single-hander; he was a morning sailor by now, anyway. Andy worried what might befall him when he was alone, and paid a succession of nurse-companions to be in the next room if he woke up in the night and needed a morsel of talk or a glass of milk. Older women, quite a few of them, set their caps for him, of course, and were disappointed. He told Carol once that he didn't plan to marry again. "I'm afraid I might get a lemon this time," he said.

"They say the early forties is the new late thirties."

He was the same, still lithe and only a bit slower, and one evening in August, 1984, when he came for dinner he complained that he'd knocked his head the day before while unloading a canoe from the roof rack of his car, over at Walker Pond; now he was having trouble knowing exactly where he was or what was happening around him. Carol and I smiled at him. "Yes, that happens sometimes, doesn't it?" we assured him.

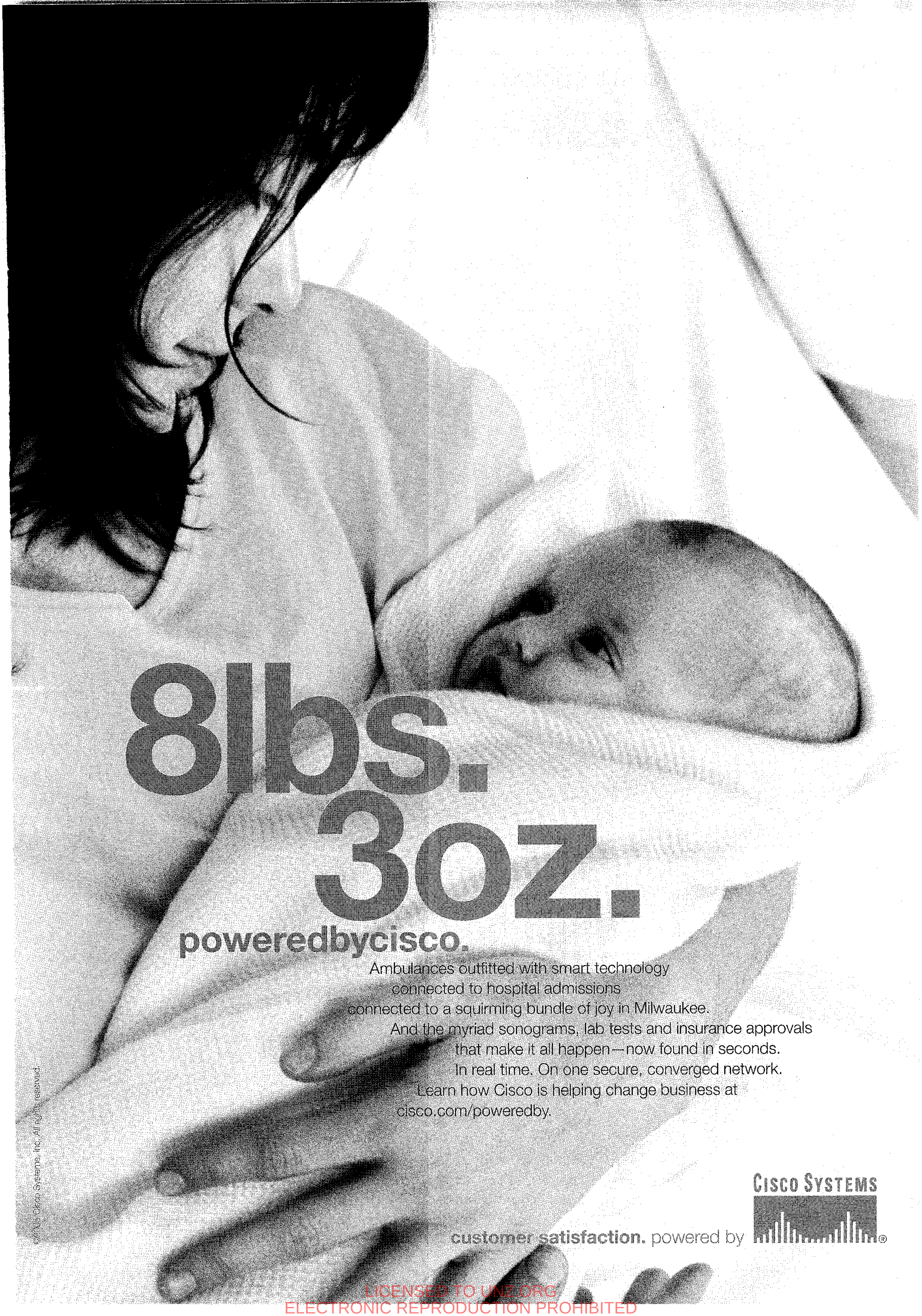
But he knew better. A couple of months later, after we'd left, he took to his bed and never again knew exactly where he was. It looked like a rapid onset of Alzheimer's, but more likely, the doctors thought, was a senile dementia brought on by the blow to his head that day. He was eighty-five now. Nurses and practical nurses and other local ladies were hired, round the clock, who took extraordinary care of him. My brother managed it all, and somehow managed his own life as well. When I came up for a visit, early in the winter, Joe said that Andy would know me but that our conversation would be interesting. "How do you mean?" I said. "You'll see," he said.

I walked in and found him restless in his bed and amazingly frail. His eyes lit up and he said my name in the old way: "Rog!" He wanted to know how I'd come from New York and I said that Henry Allen had picked me up at the Bangor airport. "Did you fly over Seattle on the way?" he asked. He didn't seem troubled when I said no, and after a moment murmured, "Lost in the clouds."

He died the next October, still at home and able to recognize the people around him. Joe told me that in that long year he'd read aloud to his father often, and discovered that he enjoyed listening to his own writings, though he wasn't always clear about who the author was. Sometimes he'd raise a hand and impatiently wave a passage away: not good enough. Other evenings, he'd listen to the end, almost at rest, and then ask again who'd written these words.

"You did, Dad," Joe said.

There was a pause, and Andy said, "Well, not bad." ◆



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

YOUR TABLE IS READY

BY JOHN KENNEY

> You do not seize control at Masa. You surrender it. You pay to be putty. And you pay dearly. . . . Lunch or dinner for two can easily exceed $1,000.
>
> —*From the Times' review of Masa, a sushi restaurant that was given four stars.*

Am I very rich? Since you ask, I will tell you. Yes, I am. I happen to be one of the more successful freelance poets in New York. The point being, I eat where I like. And I like sushi. As does my wife, Babette.

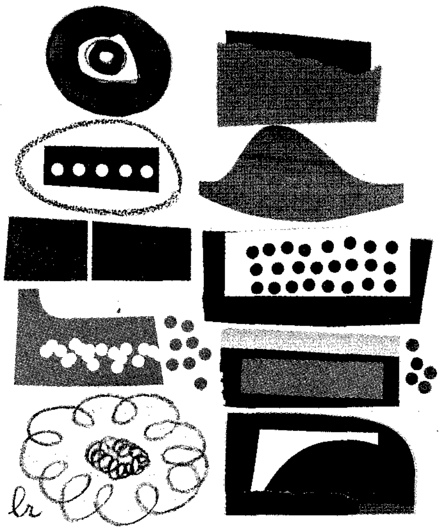
Unfortunately, we were running late. This worried me. I had been trying to get a reservation at Masa since 1987, seventeen years before it opened, as I knew that one of the prerequisites of dining there was a knowledge of the future. I also knew of the restaurant's strict "on-time" policy. Babette and I arrived exactly one minute and twenty-four seconds late. We know this because of the Swiss Atomic clock that diners see upon arrival at Masa.

The maître d' did not look happy. And so we were asked, in Japanese, to remove our clothes, in separate dressing cabins, and don simple white robes with Japanese writing on the back that, we soon found out, translated as "We were late. We didn't respect the time of others." Babette's feet were bound. I was forced to wear shoes that were two sizes too small. The point being, tardiness is not accepted at Masa. (Nor, frankly, should it be.)

The headwaiter then greeted us by slapping me in the face and telling Babette that she looked heavy, also in Japanese. (No English is spoken in the restaurant. Translators are available for hire for three hundred and twenty-five dollars per hour. We opted for one.)

And so it was that Babette, Aki, and I were led to our table, one of only seven in the restaurant, two of which are always reserved—one for former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who died five years ago, and the other for the actress and singer Claudine Longet, who accidentally shot and killed her boyfriend, the skier Spider Sabich, in 1976.

There are no windows in Masa. The light is soft, and, except for the tinkling of a miniature waterfall and the piped-in sound of an airplane losing altitude at a rapid rate, the place is silent. We sat on hemp pillows, as chairs cost extra and we were not offered any, owing to our tardiness.



Thirty-five minutes later, we met our wait staff: nine people, including two Buddhist monks, whose job it is to supervise your meal, realign your chakras, and, if you wish, teach you to play the oboe. Introductions and small talk—as translated by Aki (which, we later learned, means "Autumn")—lasted twenty minutes. I was then slapped again, though I'm not sure why.

Before any food can be ordered at Masa, one is required to choose from an extensive water menu (there is no tap water at the restaurant). With Aki's help, we selected an exceptional bottle of high-sodium Polish sparkling water known for its subtle magnesium aftertaste (a taste I admit to missing completely). Henna tattoos were then applied to the bases of our spines. Mine depicted a donkey, Babette's a dwarf with unusually large genitals.

Then it was time to order—or to be told what we were having, as there is no menu. Babette and I had been looking forward to trying an inside-out California roll and perhaps some yellowtail. Not so this night. I was brought the white-rice appetizer and Babette was brought nothing. Aki said this was not uncommon, and then told us a story about his brother, Akihiko ("Bright Boy"), who has, from the sound of it, a rather successful motor-home business outside Kyoto.

I noticed another guest a few tables away being forced to do pushups while the wait staff critiqued his wife's outfit. Aki saw me looking at them and translated the words on the back of their robes: "We were twenty minutes late. We are bad."

It was then that our entrées arrived and we realized why this restaurant is so special. Before us were bay scallops, yellow clams, red clams, and exotic needlefish, all lightly dusted with crushed purple shiso leaves. Unfortunately, none of these dishes was for us. They were for the wait staff, who enjoyed them with great gusto while standing beside our table. They nodded and smiled, telling us, through Aki, how good it all tasted. Aki told us that this was very common at fine Japanese restaurants and urged us to be on time in the future, even though he said we would never be allowed on the premises again. He then gave us a brochure for a motor home. Babette and I were strongly advised to order more water.

For dessert, I ordered nothing, as I was offered nothing. Babette was given a whole fatty red tuna wrapped in seaweed, served atop a bowl of crushed ice and garnished with a sign reading, "Happy Anniversary, Barbara" (sic).

Our bill came to eight hundred and thirty-nine dollars. Aki said we were lucky to get out for so little and then begged us to take him with us when we left. We caught a cab and got three seats at the bar at Union Square Café. ♦

LAURIE ROSENWALD

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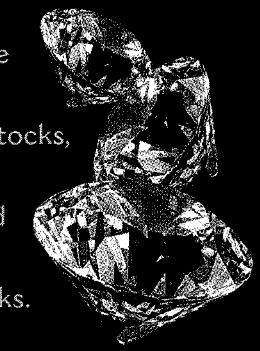

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OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

SOLE SURVIVOR

One man's quest to find the best shoes ever made.

BY BURKHARD BILGER

Petr Hlavacek's obsession with odd footwear stops just short of his own feet. During the week we spent together, he always wore the same shoes: crêpe-soled loafers, wide at the front for uninhibited toe movement and low at the heel to encourage good posture. Their uppers were of grayish suède, without insignia or decorative stitching, and were pieced together with a thick seam down the center. Their insoles were an experimental sort, designed for the tender feet of diabetics. They were the kind of shoe that would not have looked out of place on a medieval peasant. The kind, as Hlavacek would say, "that know what the feets need."

Hlavacek is a professor of shoe technology at Tomas Bata University, in the Czech city of Zlín. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis on stitching—specifically, on the effect of high needle temperatures on thread quality in the making of leather uppers—and has mounted shoe research expeditions to Mongolia, Turkey, China, and Vietnam. He has measured the feet of twenty thousand Czech children and cross-indexed their growth patterns and deformities, and he has concluded that our feet are in trouble. "The number of incorrect and dangerous shoes is high. It is higher and higher!" he told me one afternoon in Zlín, over a bowl of garlic soup. Czech shoes were once the best-made in Europe, he said, but in recent years his country, like the United States, has been flooded with cheap, poorly designed Asian shoes, and the effects are showing. "The Czech Republic is nature's laboratory," he said. "You can give them Far Asia shoes and see what happens. And we have found that the number of complications is three times higher than twenty years ago. Half of all women have deformed feet!"

Hlavacek (his name is pronounced "la-VA-check") is fifty-five years old. He has a sturdy, companionably bulky build, like a badger's, with long, shrewd features and thick blond hair combed straight back. When he speaks English, he tends to add syllables to his words ("applicate," "observate") and to punctuate his sentences with exclamations, as if to mimic the elaborate endings and accents of Czech. "You look at the woman, she is full of pain. Who is guilty? Shoes!"

Listen to Hlavacek long enough and you may come to believe that shoes are responsible for a great deal—that human affairs proceed largely from the feet. "There is a shock when you realize what role shoes play in history," he says. Why did Alexander's armies conquer the world? Because they got shoes from the Persians. Why did Napoleon's armies overrun Europe? Because French scientists devised the most supple, sturdy leather for army boots. (Hlavacek thinks that today's soldiers, who do little marching, would be better off in sneakers.) One of the pivotal points in Middle Eastern history, he believes, came in 1956, when Egypt kicked British and French shoemakers out of the country. Eleven years later, when Egyptian soldiers fought Israel in the Six-Day War, the soles of their boots were held together with tacks. The farther they marched, the more the tacks heated up on the sands of the Sinai and drove through the leather, until the soldiers felt as if they were walking on red-hot nails. In pictures of their retreat, you see abandoned jeeps and tanks, and hundreds and hundreds of shoes.

Was footwear favored by Stone Age hunters more sensible than what we wear today?

FILIP PAGOWSKI

Over the years, the plight of modern feet has prompted Hlavacek to develop a number of new shoe technologies, such as the insoles of his loafers. Mostly, though, it has led him further and further back, into prehistory. The majority of today's footwear is less ergonomic than Roman sandals of two thousand years ago, Hlavacek believes. And so, like a Renaissance scholar scouring ancient Greek texts, he spends much of his time trying to rediscover what his predecessors knew. In the past two years alone, he has analyzed a fifteenth-century German pilgrim's shoe, reconstructed a pair of ten-thousand-year-old sandals found in Oregon, and classified the shoe styles worn by angels in Byzantine religious icons. But the shoes that have taught him the most, the ones that first drew me to Zlín, are those worn by Ötzi, the Ice Man.

Early one September afternoon fourteen years ago, two German tourists were hiking down a glacier in the Ötztal, in South Tyrol, when they came upon a dead man, frozen up to his waist in the ice. He was emaciated and perfectly hairless, bent over a pool of meltwater with his arms propped beneath him, as if trying to wrench himself free. The hikers, Helmut and Erika Simon, took him for a mountaineer at first, as did local police when they came to investigate. But a team of archeologists at the University of Innsbruck soon reached a different conclusion: the body belonged to a Stone Age hunter, they said, who died in the valley more than five thousand years earlier. He was fully equipped and well armed—an axe, a dagger, a net, a bowstave, a quiver of arrows, and birch-bark containers were found in the ice around him—and when he died his corpse was naturally mummified by the glacier.

Ötzi, as he came to be called, was subjected to countless scientific indignities in the months that followed. Excavators tore him from the ice with a pneumatic chisel, damaging his buttocks and one of his thighs; biologists probed his teeth for traces of disease and squeezed samples from his rehydrated colon to reconstruct his diet. At various points, they concluded that he was a vegan, a vegetarian, and an omnivore (his last meals were of cereals, ibex, and elk). He died of hypothermia or ritual sacrifice. When a stone arrowhead was found buried in his left shoulder, and DNA analysis identified the blood of four other men on his clothes and weapons, it was suggested that he had been killed by rival big-game hunters. Ötzi had arrived in Europe like a time traveller, and scientists seemed to glimpse all of Stone Age culture in his remains.

What they didn't pay proper attention to, in Petr Hlavacek's opinion, was his shoes. "They were not shoemakers," he says, flatly. "They had no knowledge of the feet." To Hlavacek, a shoe is both a social statement—"It says who I am, how I am rich, what are my goals, what are my tendencies"—and a kind of medical file. He can read a person's height, weight, and physical ailments in the shape of his sneakers and the scuff marks on the soles. Over the years, he has worked on a number of cases with Czech historians and police, dating and identifying murder victims and other bodies. He made a diagnosis of syphilis in Albrecht von Wallenstein, the seventeenth-century Austrian general, based on his boots alone. (Advanced syphilis gives people an awkward, stork-like walk that leaves crescent-shaped marks on their heels.) A physical anthropologist later exhumed Wallenstein's bones and confirmed the diagnosis.

Hlavacek first heard about Ötzi's shoes five or six months after the body was discovered. "I have friends in Germany; they are shoemakers," he remembers. "They called me and said, 'Ötzi is with shoes!' " The Ice Man had become an international celebrity by then. His body had nearly sparked a border skirmish between Austria and Italy—the remains were found less than a hundred metres from the frontier, on the Italian side—and Konrad Spindler, the principal archeologist, had been hounded by requests from other scientists and reporters. When Hlavacek wrote to invite him to a shoe conference and to ask if Ötzi's shoes might be examined, Spindler politely declined the invitation. But, in his reply, he noted that the shoes had been moved from Innsbruck to a museum in Mainz, Germany. "One very free interpretation of his letter was 'The shoes are in Mainz for you,' " Hlavacek says. "So I told myself, 'Only people with courage are successful!' "

A week later, he was on an overnight train to Mainz, carrying Spindler's letter with him as an invitation.

"I am a curiosity," Hlavacek admits. "It is not so usual to be so interested in shoes." His father was a shoemaker, so one might suppose that he

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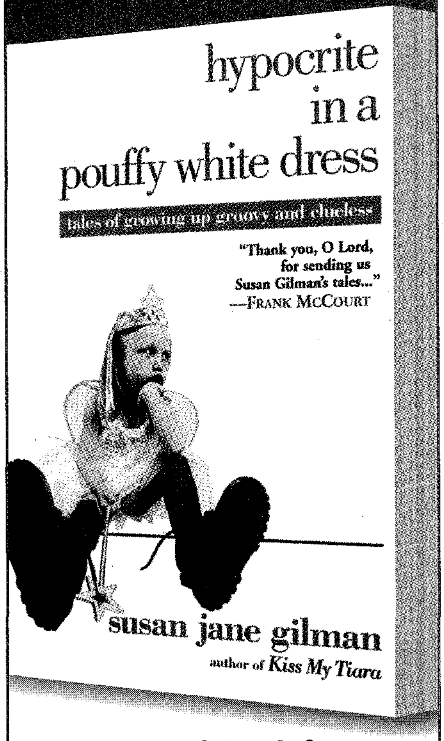
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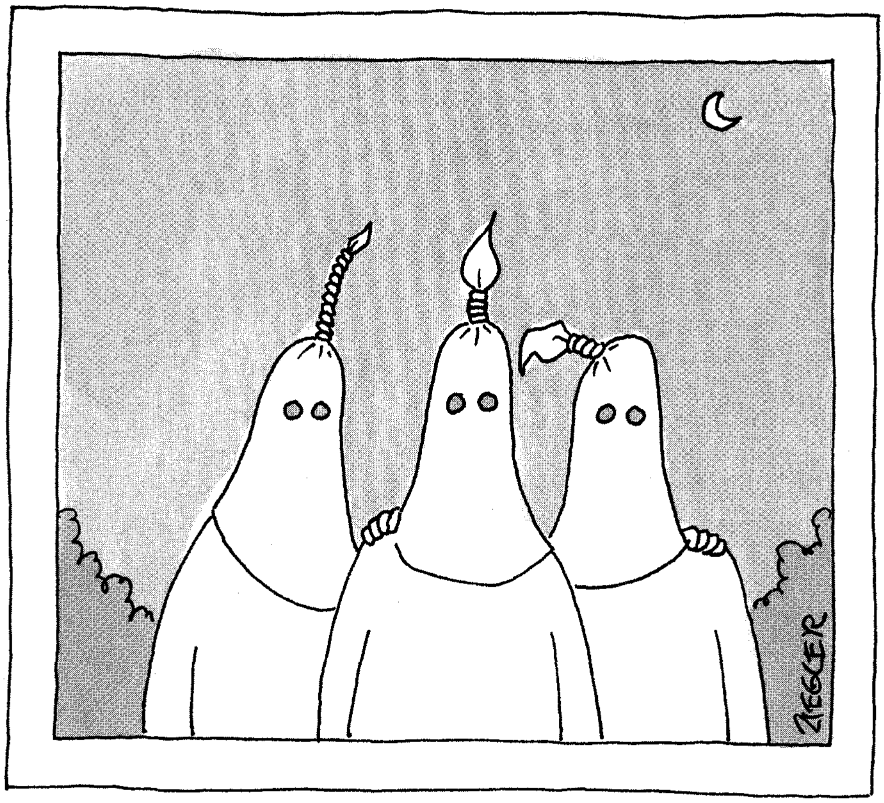


The Three Stylish Klansmen

• •

inherited his obsession, but his home town probably had more to do with it. Zlín is a city of shoes the way other places, shaped by the strict divisions of labor under Communism, are cities of linen or pipe fittings or plastic explosives. It lies two hundred and fifty kilometres southeast of Prague, in pious Moravian farming country, and has spent much of its history recovering from periodic plunderings by Hungarians, Austrians, and Poles. Until the twentieth century, the area was best known for its potent plum brandy, slivovitz, which locals drink as a kind of folk medication, muttering phrases like "Where it goes, there it heals." In 1894, Tomas Bata, an eighth-generation cobbler with a utopian streak, opened a small shoe shop in town. Within forty years, he had turned it into the largest and most sophisticated shoe company in the world.

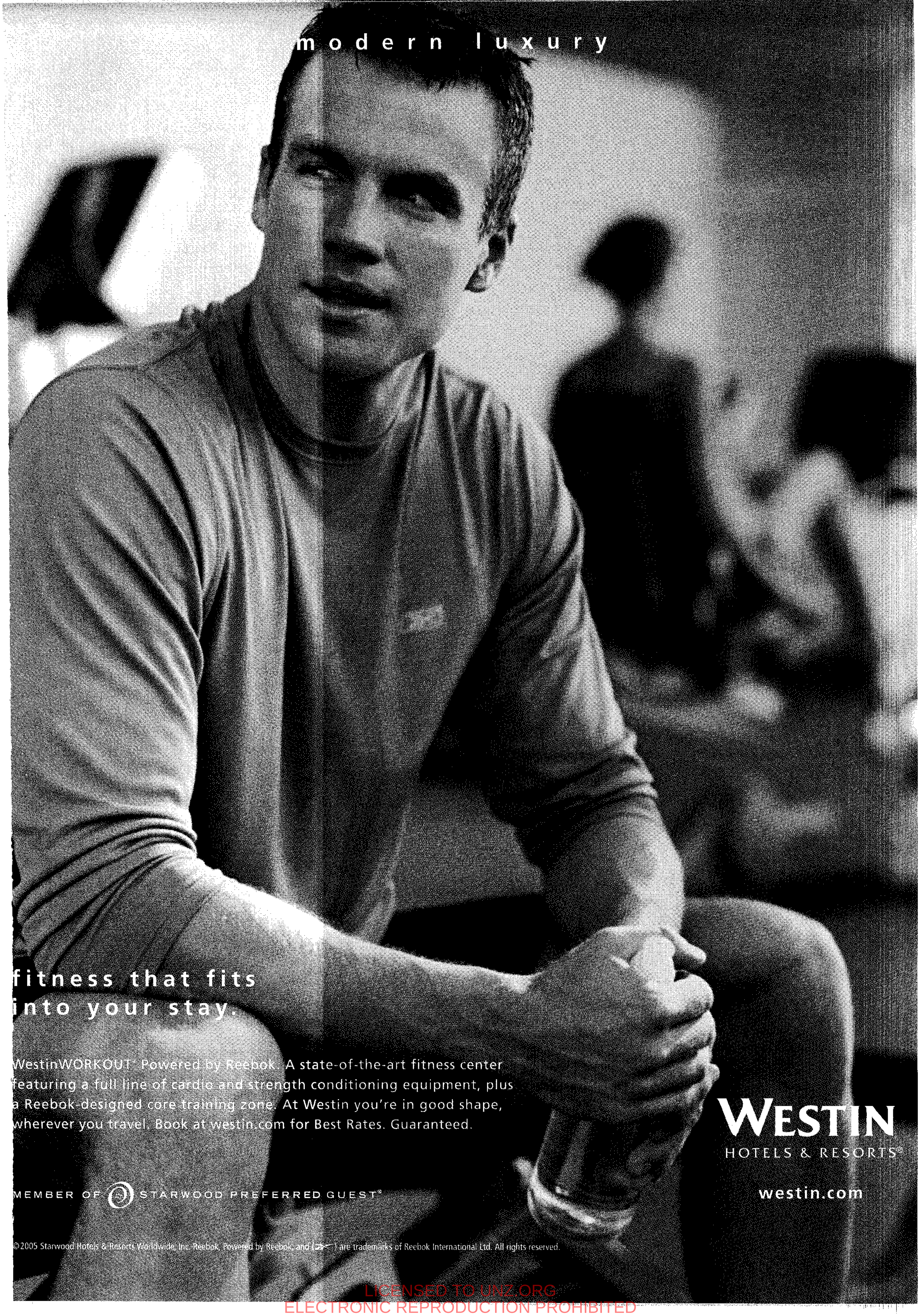
"It was practically a republic within a republic," Hlavacek told me when he gave me a tour of the city on my first day there. As we walked, his right arm swept periodically across the skyline in the manner of a civic booster from the nineteen-fifties: Here was the first Czech escalator! There the country's first skyscraper! There its tallest chimney and its largest movie theatre! By the nineteen-thirties, Bata was producing fifty-eight million pairs of shoes a year and had sixty-five thousand employees, in thirty-three countries. (In parts of Africa, a sneaker is still called a Bata.) As the company grew, Bata hired modernist architects to rebuild Zlín along the lines of Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse, with modular factories of brick and glass. He built schools, hospitals, and homes for his peasant workers, then sent his wife, Marie, door to door to teach them modern manners and hygiene.

In its heyday, Zlín was known as the Czechoslovak America. But by Hlavacek's time it had lost most of its utopian spirit. Bata was killed in a plane crash in 1932, and the rest of the family fled to Canada after the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia. By 1950, when Hlavacek was born, Zlín's name had been changed to Gottwaldov, in honor of the country's first Communist President, and Bata was sending most of its shoes to the Soviet Union.

Hlavacek might never have studied shoes at all had his father not had a feud with the local Communist Party boss. It began when his father refused to play the flugelhorn at a May Day celebration. (He was annoyed at having been denied an extra allotment of coal the previous winter.) By the time Petr graduated from elementary school, the Party boss so disliked the Hlavaceks that he had the boy designated for farm labor, despite his high grades. Petr's father visited the high schools in Zlín to plead his son's case, and eventually arrived at the shoe academy that Bata had established. Though geared toward industry, it offered a full baccalaureate degree and excellent instruction in math and science. There had been a shortage of male applicants that year, the principal remarked, to which the elder Hlavacek replied that his son had always had a deep interest in footwear. By that night, the decision had been made. "He came back and he said, 'It is clear!' " Petr remembers. "You will not be a farmer! You will not mine! You will not join the Army! You will study the shoes!"

Hlavacek says that he is apolitical, but he seems to have inherited his father's rebellious streak. He led student protests in Zlín during the Prague Spring, in 1968, and again during the Velvet Revolution, in 1989. As a young man, he had little patience for the Communist social clubs he was told to join, so he took refuge in the local shoe museum, where he led tours. There one could see history's bloody reforms and counter-reforms reduced to oscillating toe lengths and heel heights. The French traded in their high heels for modest slippers after the Revolution. The Germans renounced their sabatons, with foot-long, articulated toes, for the stub-nosed shoes favored by Martin Luther.

In time, Hlavacek traced the patterns back through Crispin, the patron saint of shoemakers, to the Egyptians, who were buried with sandals for their long walk in the afterlife. But there the line seemed to end: shoes were either too perishable or too disposable to survive from prehistoric times.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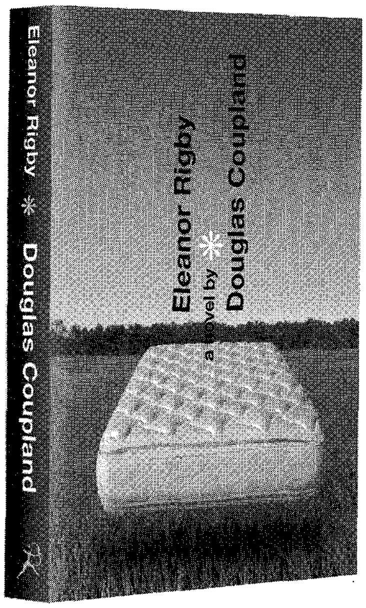

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"It was my dream to see the oldest European shoes," Hlavacek says. And then came Ötzi.

When Hlavacek first saw the remains at the museum in Mainz, they didn't look much like shoes. The leather was torn and partly decomposed, mixed with blackened hay and bits of twine, like a clump of horse dung. The curators had given Hlavacek only twenty minutes, so he worked in a state of near-panic, making sketches and taking measurements, examining abrasions and noting what looked like repair marks. In twenty minutes, he managed to contradict much of what previous researchers had found—noting, for instance, that the right and left shoes were identically shaped, rather than asymmetrical, like modern shoes. He faxed his report to Konrad Spindler the next day, a Friday. By Monday, Spindler was making arrangements for him to see the Ice Man's feet.

"It was like winning the Nobel Prize," Hlavacek says. "It was like flying with angels." In the months that followed, Hlavacek painstakingly reconstructed the shoes' original design. He took imprints of the mummy's feet, then converted them to three-dimensional drawings on his computer. He compared the joint and heel measurements with those of local schoolchildren—Ötzi was only five feet three, with a modern adolescent's build—to get a sense of how the feet were shaped before their muscles atrophied and dried out. Then he took the closest match, a twelve-year-old boy, and made plaster casts of his feet. When he was finished, he called his longtime collaborator, Vaclav Gresak, and asked him to make some shoes.

Gresak, who is fifty, teaches leatherworking in Hlavacek's department. He spends his free time making replicas of historic American saddles, and may be the only man in the world whose business card reads "University Professor. Saddler." Tall and rangy, with tanned, chiselled features, Gresak dresses like a somewhat dandyish Marlboro man: crisp plaid shirts open at the chest, bluejeans with fancy stitching. Hlavacek and he make an oddly effective team. One is an excitable theorist, the other an unflappable pragmatist. "We are a tandem," Hlavacek says.

To Hlavacek, Ötzi seems to be a distant, otherworldly figure, with savage customs and strange, animistic beliefs. (He is taken with Spindler's theory that Ötzi used bearskin for the soles of his shoes so he could absorb the animal's power as he walked.) To Gresak, Ötzi is more of a kindred spirit—a prehistoric colleague. If he was able to make the shoes five thousand years ago, Gresak thought, when he first saw them, why shouldn't I?

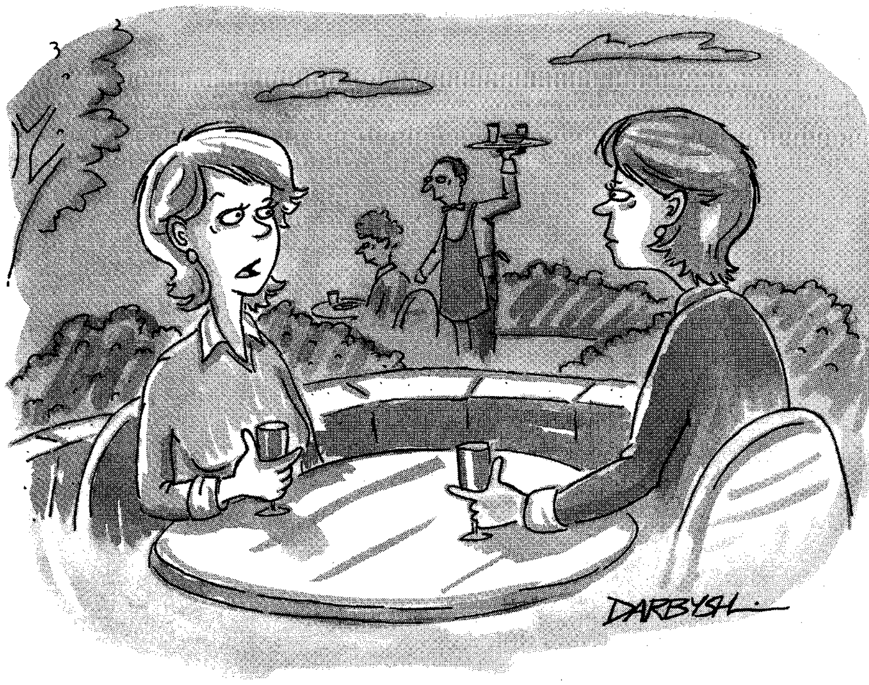
Hlavacek's reconstructed design called for plain leather uppers and soles, stretched across a netting of braided linden bark, with a thick stuffing of hay. It seemed simple enough. "But I have experience that these simple things become very complicated," Gresak says. There was the matter of materials, for instance. Microscopic studies of the leather had shown that it came from three sources: deerskin on the uppers, calfskin on the bindings, and bearskin on the soles. Deerskin and calfskin were easy to find, but bears are endangered in Europe and strictly protected. To get a fresh hide, Hlavacek and Gresak had to hire a bear hunter in Canada and have him send his kill to the Czech Republic. In return, they agreed to stuff what was left of the animal and send it back. (As it turned out, the bear's hair fell out on the trip over, so taxidermy was out of the question. They ended up paying the hunter three hundred dollars—about half a month's salary in the Czech Republic—and hanging the bear's mangy head on the wall of their shoe laboratory.)

That left the knottier problem of technique. Tanned leather is a fairly sophisticated material. It has to be salted, soaked, and scraped, then treated with an agent that chemically toughens and preserves it. People have used everything from chestnuts and sourdough to urine and saliva as tanning agents, but microscopic analysis suggested that Ötzi's shoes were processed with some sort of fat. The obvious candidate was fish oil, which Native Americans often used for tanning, but Ötzi lived far inland. Squeezing enough fat from local trout would have taken months. Olive or grape-seed oil might have worked, but only if applied under high pressure, and marrow fat was a disappointment: when Gresak and Hlavacek tried it on the bear hide, after boiling down twenty kilos of bones, the leather turned hard and brittle.

It was Gresak who hit upon the answer. Leafing through a nineteenth-century book on tanning, he found a reference to the early Inuit, who tanned polar-bear hides with the animals' own brains and liver. To test the technique, he bought some pig organs from a butcher (the Canadian hunter hadn't sent the bear's innards) and took them to a cabin he has in the Beskydy Mountains, fifty kilometres east of Zlín. He boiled the fat out of the liver, mixed it with the brains, and smeared it on pieces of skin hung outside on a primitive wood frame. "The smell was so powerful that all the flies from a five-kilometre area, minimally, flied to this concentrated place," Hlavacek says. But the results were gratifying: enzymes in the liver acted as an emulsifier, dispersing the fats through the hides. When Gresak washed them clean in a stream a few days later, they had become decay-resistant and moderately flexible. All that was left was to cut them to size with a piece of flint, stitch them together with a bone needle, and take them for a walk.

One afternoon not long after I arrived, Hlavacek, Gresak, and I drove up to the Beskydy Mountains, to a hiking path not far from Gresak's cabin. The land had once been a collectivized farm, Gresak explained, but now belonged to a private riding stable, with mounds of hay in the fields for the horses and flower boxes hung from the windows of an old red barn. When we arrived, Hlavacek opened the trunk of his Ford Fiesta, took out a brown paper sack, and pulled out two pairs of shoes. The first were replicas of the oldest known American footwear: ten-thousand-year-old sandals from a rock shelter in central Oregon. The original sandals had been found under a layer of ash from a volcano that had killed the wearer but preserved the shoes. The replicas, made by Gresak, were like little baskets for the feet: tightly woven out of twisted strands of wormwood bark, with arched toe coverings and open heels. Hlavacek walked over to a wooden bench to put them on, then handed me the second pair.

Before I came, Hlavacek had sent me an e-mail with travel arrangements, then added, in a matter-of-fact way, as if it were a standard formality between new acquaintances, "What is size of your feet?" These shoes were the reason. Gresak had made eight pairs of Ötzi replicas. The first three were historically exact, built around the plaster casts of the twelve-year-old boy's feet; the others were custom-made for different wearers. This pair was made for Hlavacek, who, as it turned out, had the same size feet as I do. They were



"He thinks I'm a good cook in the same way I think he's good in bed."

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much bulkier and more ungainly than the sandals, with open netting at the heels and bulbous leather toes. They didn't look like the sort of thing a big-game hunter would wear into enemy territory. They looked like prehistoric clown shoes.

"Science demands sacrifice!" Hlavacek exclaimed, grinning, as I sat down beside him to put them on. We would take a five-kilometre hike and then compare notes on the replicas, he said, but he already knew I had the better pair. He and Gresak had tried out the Oregon sandals that winter, on snow-covered roads in these mountains, and had found them less than orthopedic. "First ten minutes, no problem," he said. "One hour, no problem. But after four hours . . . " The sandals were made to be worn without socks or other insulation, so his feet got cold, and blades of cut grass kept sliding up through the weave to spear his soles. Not so with Ötzi's shoes. "You will feel a little bit discomfort, but it is only a question of one hundred metres," Hlavacek assured me. "Then you will feel the best level of comfort, the warm comfort."

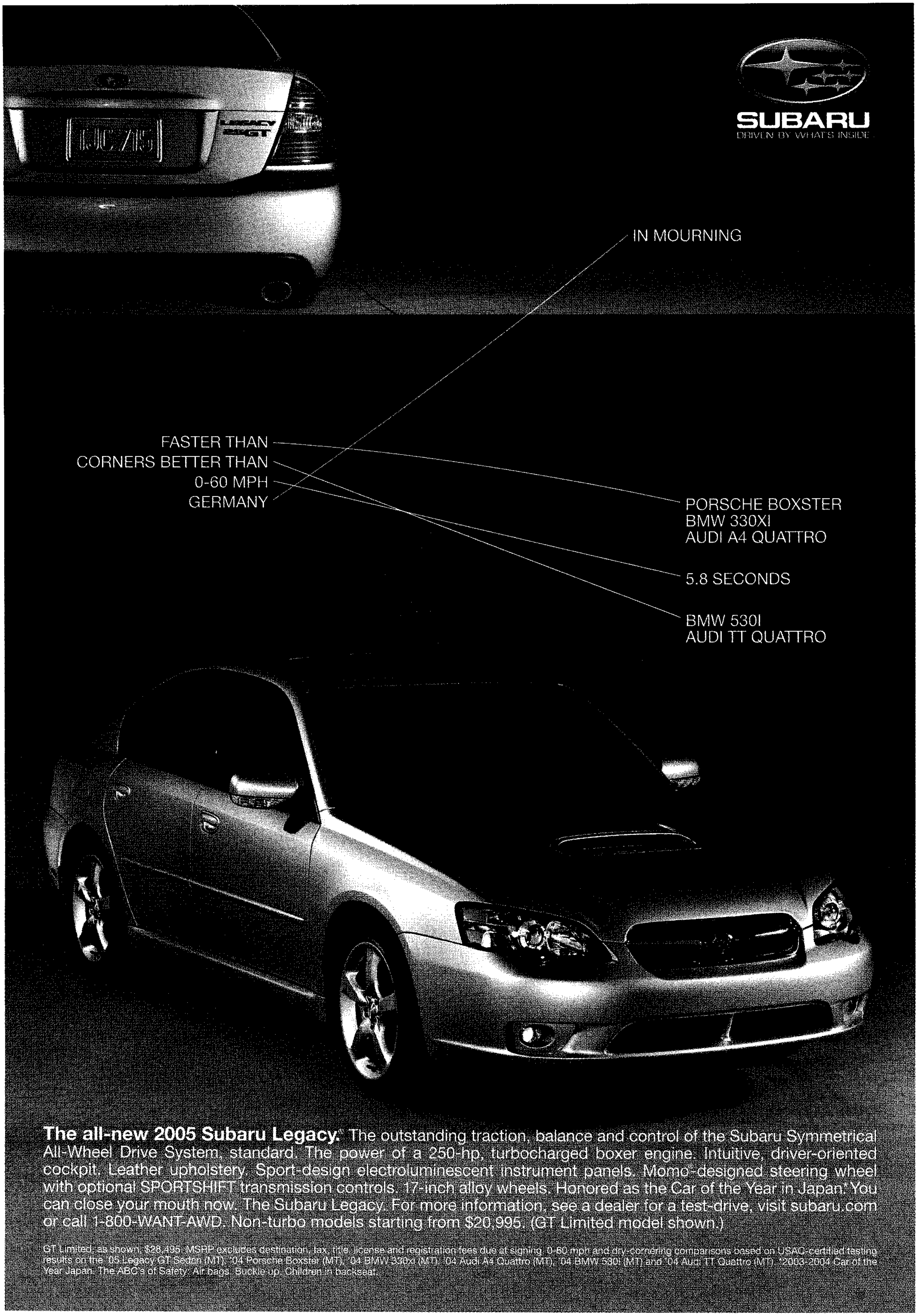
As Hlavacek talked, Gresak knelt down beside me with sacks of hay and moss and began stuffing fistfuls into the netting that lined the shoes. The hay would pad my feet and insulate them, he said; the moss would keep them comfortable. "In the Czech language we have expression for a man who is very poor," Gresak said. "We say you can see the hay sticking out of his shoes. With Ötzi it is the opposite: you have to see the hay for comfort." Once my feet were bundled up, with thick tufts sprouting around the ankles, we set off across the field in single file, Gresak in the lead. "Don't hurry," Hlavacek said, bringing up the rear. "We are in the Stone Age."

The path wound through pastures and orchards and through stands of lofty, gray-barked beeches to a ridge that overlooked the Podrevnicko Valley. Here and there in the distance, church spires and grain silos rose above clusters of red tile roofs and turnip fields. It was a balmy Indian-summer day, and as we walked our feet stirred up the scent of wild rosemary and oregano. Gresak sauntered over to a tree along the path, plucked something from it, and handed it to me: a tiny purple plum. "It's symbolical," Hlavacek said. "Ötzi had dried plums when they found him." These meadows, he added, were a lot like those Ötzi must have passed through on his long trek to the high country.

I felt a little sorry for the Ice Man then, and not just because he was fated to die on that trip. The "little bit discomfort" that Hlavacek had warned me about was persisting well past a hundred metres, and the moss was proving no substitute for a good pair of socks. My feet itched; they itched a lot. If not for Hlavacek, I would have taken the clown shoes off immediately and gone barefoot. But the sight of him shambling along behind me was oddly inspiring. His face was flushed; his shoulders hunched forward; his fanny-pack was pulled toward the front and bulging with supplies. He had a heart valve replaced eight years ago, and was taking blood thinners to prevent clots from forming. Yet here he was. The woven soles of his sandals were smooth on the bottom, so he had to use a walking stick to keep from slipping on the wet grass. Once or twice, his feet flew out from under him completely, sending him into midair and onto his seat.

To be a shoe historian, it seems, is to stumble continually over a basic question: Why do people wear shoes at all? The foot is one of nature's most splendid creations. Paleontologists say that it was the first body part to achieve its modern shape, and no wonder: as bipedal creatures, our evolutionary success depended on getting this one appendage exactly right. The foot's segmented, elegantly arched design is wonderfully flexible and strong. It can tolerate temperatures as low as forty degrees and, given time to develop calluses, negotiate most terrains in relative comfort. It's a supreme example of form following function—so of course people have spent a million years trying to redesign it. "Society, apparently, agrees that the human foot as formed by nature is coarse, vulgar and unsightly, and that its width, especially at the toes, is entirely too great," an orthopedist by the name of Philip Hoffmann wrote in 1905, in the *American Journal of Orthopedic Surgery*. "What it so commonly does admire is the dainty little shoe that hides its own handiwork—the distorted, cramped, calloused and repulsive foot."

Hoffmann's anti-footwear feelings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had been stirred by a visit to the 1904 World's Fair, in St. Louis. A group of African Pygmies and Philippine tribesmen, barefoot all their lives, had been put on display for the edification of shoe-wearing peoples. Hoffmann took a look at their feet. In a hundred and eighty-six pairs, he reported, he didn't find a single deformity or ailment. There were no broken arches, no hyperextended joints—none of the weaknesses "so characteristic and common in adult shoe-wearing feet." In the pictures published with the article, the tribesmen's feet look almost alarmingly healthy. They're leathery, thick-knuckled, full of character. Their toes are so widely splayed they look prehensile, like a gecko's. With the right training, you imagine, they could play Jelly Roll Morton. By comparison, our own feet are pale, spindly, useless things. They've devolved, as Hoffmann put it, into "mere pedestals."

Shoes serve some practical purpose, of course. The Bata Shoe Museum, in Toronto, built several decades after the family's exile from Zlín, is full of ingenious footwear for unpleasant environments: Yup'ik boots from the Alaskan coast, made out of waterproof salmon skin; Swedish shoes made out of birch bark, with antibacterial properties to prevent foot odor; Dutch smuggling shoes that leave footprints headed in the opposite direction. But until the nineteenth century most people in the world went barefoot much of the time. Even in Europe and the United States, shoes were largely a status symbol, all the more impressive for their impracticality. "If you can prove that you don't have to walk, it's one of the best ways of proving all the other things you don't have to do," Elizabeth Semmelhack, the curator of the Bata Shoe Museum, told me.

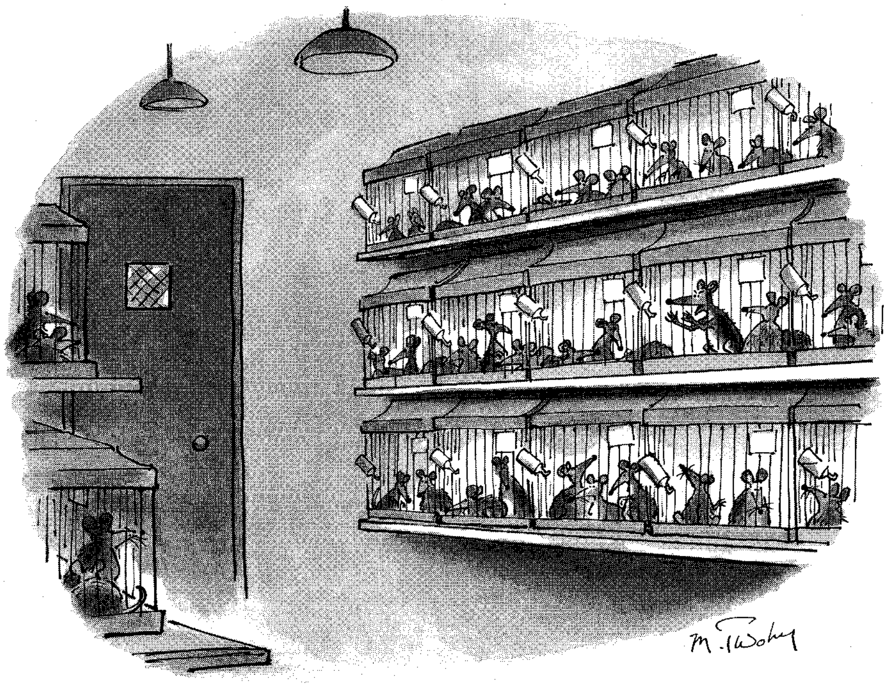
Urbanites were the first people to wear shoes year-round, and generations of them have gradually turned cities into a new sort of extreme environment. Yielding footpaths have given way to abrasive sidewalks, grassy fields to blistering parking lots, until few feet can stand to go unshod. "Maybe it is a mistake in human development," Hlavacek said. "But I think to stop using the shoes is impossible."

Ötzi's shoes fascinated him, in part, because they were designed to handle the rocky slopes of the high Alps—the Stone Age equivalent of New York's streets. The Ice Man probably went barefoot at lower elevations, Hlavacek said, or stuck his feet into a stream, as I eventually did, to moisten the hay. But, once he reached the glacier, he put on his shoes.

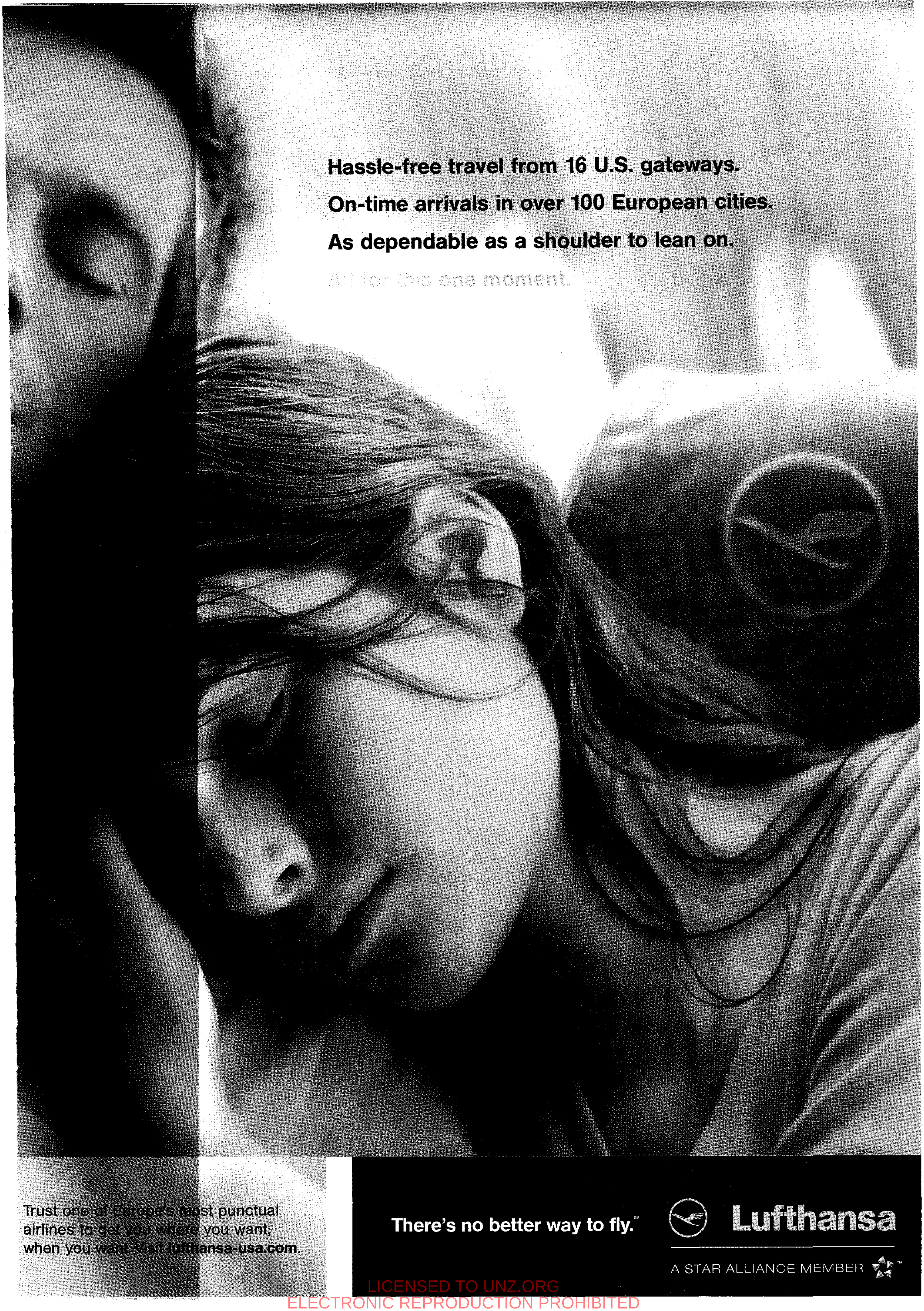
Flimsy as they looked, the shoes were ideally suited to the mountains, Hlavacek found. He and Gresak measured the tensile strength of the leather and the thermal conductivity of the hay. They took the shoes to a hockey rink and pushed each other around in them, to measure the sole's adhesion to the ice. They taped pressure sensors to the bottom of their feet, put on the shoes, and walked on a treadmill. The results surprised even Hlavacek. Aside from their tensile strength, which couldn't equal that of today's leathers, the replicas outperformed their modern counterparts in every category. The hay had more loft and was better insulating than standard synthetics; the bearskin gripped as well as the best rubber. The shoes were so well cushioned that the body's weight was evenly distributed across the soles: the peak pressure points were half as high as in hiking boots, seventy-five-per-cent lower than in sneakers, and eighty-five-per-cent lower than in high heels. "It is miracle," Hlavacek said. "In these shoes you can practically not obtain the blisters."

The true test came later, though, in the Alps. Botanists had by then identified the wood and plant fibres in the Ice Man's weapons and clothing, and the pollen grains in his colon and lungs. They had concluded that he'd died sometime in the late spring or early summer, after hiking into the mountains from the Vinschgau Valley, some thirty kilometres to the south. (One theory held that he was a sheepherder on the lam, pursued by men who had massacred his village.) Hlavacek hoped, at first, to recruit some hikers of roughly Ötzi's stature and foot size to make a similar trip. But "to prepare an expedition of twelve-year-old boys was rejected as too dangerous," he later wrote in a paper. Gresak was sick with an intestinal parasite that he had contracted while on vacation in India. So Hlavacek asked three other colleagues to join him. Among them was Vaclav Patek, a well-known Czech climber and designer of mountain-climbing shoes.

They set off on September 17, 2001, each stuffed into a pair of Gresak's replicas. Over the next three days, they climbed more than fifteen hundred metres, across snow-covered glaciers and granite scree. They trudged through



"*When Dr. Henderson comes in, everybody play dead.*"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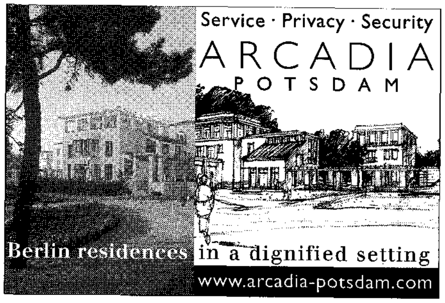

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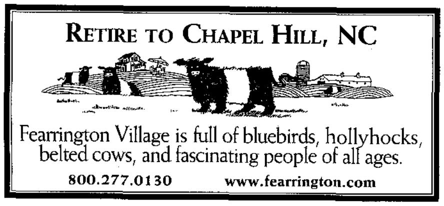

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streams of meltwater barely above freezing, yet their feet felt only a momentary chill. When, periodically, Hlavacek stuck a thermometer inside the hikers' shoes, the readings hovered comfortably around seventy degrees Fahrenheit. More surprising, to a climber like Patek, was how well the shoes performed on difficult terrain. Their soles were so light and flexible, their leather so adhesive, that they could easily scale granite boulders. By the time the expedition reached Ötzi's grave site, on the tenth anniversary of his discovery, Patek had declared the boots more comfortable and capable than any he'd worn. "There is no mountain in Europe that couldn't be conquered in these shoes," he told Hlavacek.

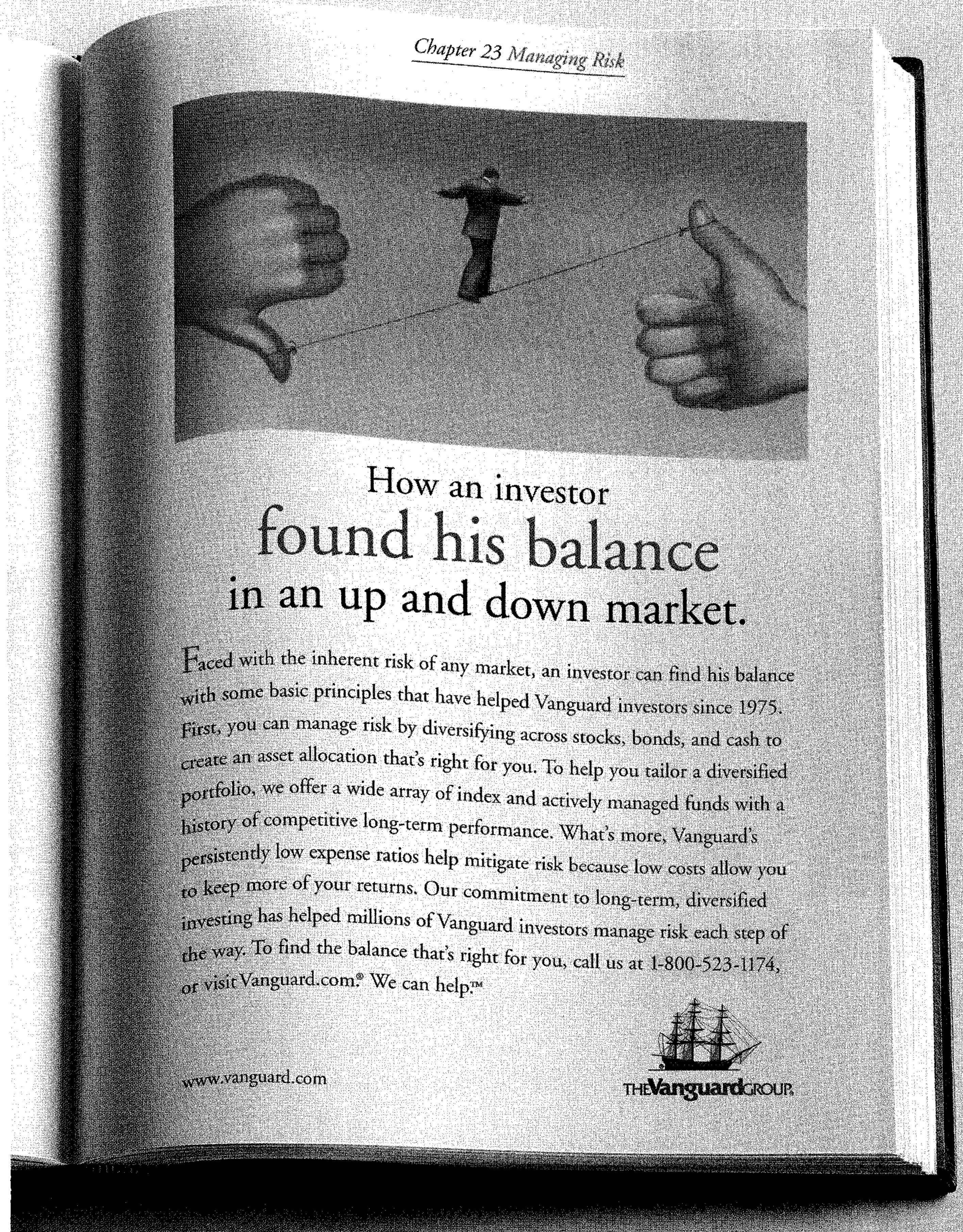
In the years since, as Hlavacek has made the rounds of shoe conferences with his findings, he has often been asked the same question. As he puts it, "Can we applicate it?" His immediate answer is "Yes! There don't exist other hiking shoes where you cannot obtain the blisters!" But, on further reflection, he admits that hay and bear hide are not obvious materials for mass production. "There is a little problem, I must say, with the hygiene," he told me. "It is not possible to change the hay every day." Some aspects of the shoes—their light, flexible construction and the loft of their padding, for instance—could be put to use in modern designs, but only in the most abstract form. "Practically nobody wants to wear shoes like this," Hlavacek said.

Unfortunately, the alternatives are often worse. Making his way down the aisle of a shoe store in a mall one evening, Hlavacek picked up a tiny sandal made out of a translucent red synthetic. He held it up to the light and peered at the cartoon bug glued on top. "Very dangerous are these full plastic shoes," he said, frowning. "They are good only for a short time, in the sea." He set the shoe down and moved on, taking in each new horror in turn. Over here were some tennis shoes with Velcro straps that would cut off the foot's circulation. Over there a pair so airtight that they would turn into steam baths ("very, very perilous"). Some shoes were made of vinyl or faux leather with no "shape memory"—in time, they would mold the foot to their own twisted form. Others seemed almost deliberately cruel.

"What to say?" Hlavacek told me, stopping in front of a display of stiletto-heeled boots. "They are not made for walking on the feet." The high heels would shift eighty-five per cent of the body's weight to the toes—the part of the foot least equipped to handle it—while the heel bone, one of the sturdiest in the body, would be left hovering in the air. Shoemakers divide feet into three broad categories, Hlavacek said: Egyptian feet, in which the big toe is the longest; Greek feet, which have a long second toe; and cubic feet, with toes of equal length. But no foot in the world was shaped like these boots: needle-toed and impossibly slender. Whoever bought them, he added, would probably unknowingly add to her misery: half of all women buy shoes that are too small for them.

For a time, after the 1989 revolution, Hlavacek had a more optimistic view. He dreamed of rekindling the old Bata spirit—of creating shoes that would combine new technologies with ancient innovations. He imagined a shoe store like a high-tech cobbler's shop: patrons would get three-dimensional scans of their feet, choose a style and material, and have their shoes custom-made by machine. Parents would enter their shoe sizes into a store computer, along with their children's sex, foot size, and date of birth. Then a program that Hlavacek developed, based on a statistical study of two thousand families, would predict the children's foot growth in coming months and tell them what size shoes to buy.

On December 13, 1989, three days after Vaclav Havel announced the appointment of a new cabinet, Thomas Bata, Jr., who is now ninety, returned to Prague from a fifty-year exile in Canada. At the airport and along the road to the city, thousands of people gathered with flags and handmade signs to welcome him home. Bata and his wife, Sonja, drove to Wenceslas Square that day, where he was to speak to a crowd of a hundred thousand. First, though, they met with Havel, "officiating among bits and pieces of furniture, half-empty pop bottles, and unfinished sandwiches," as Bata later recalled. Havel's grandfather had been a Bata executive before the war, and Thomas Bata, Jr., had dated



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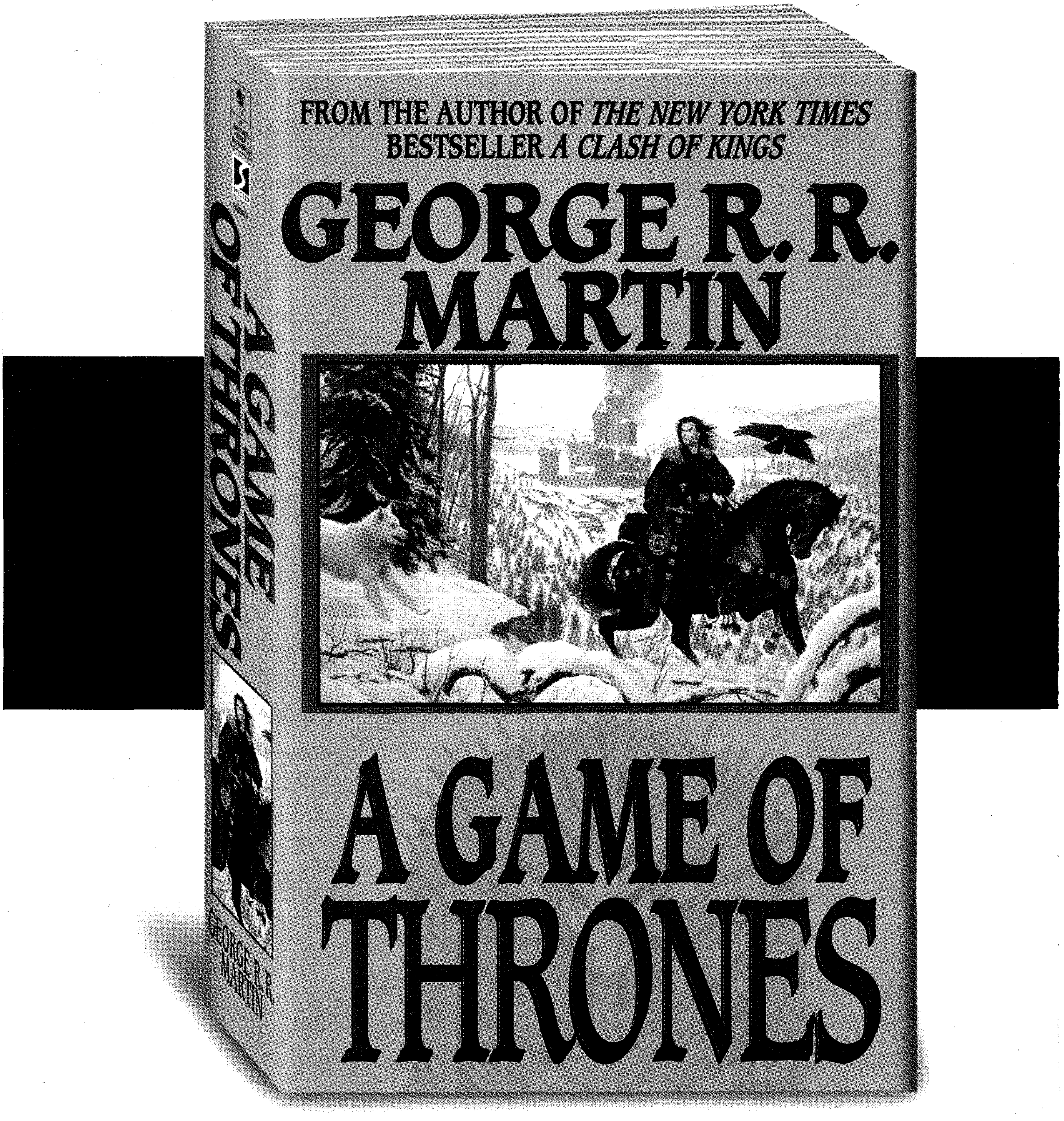
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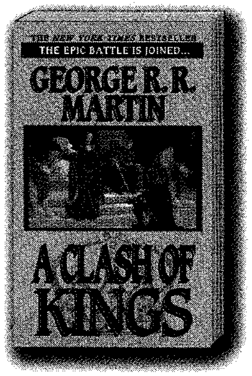
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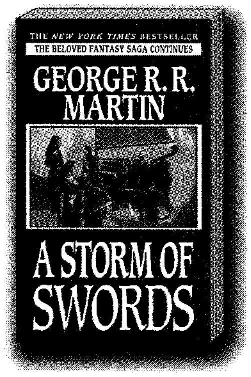
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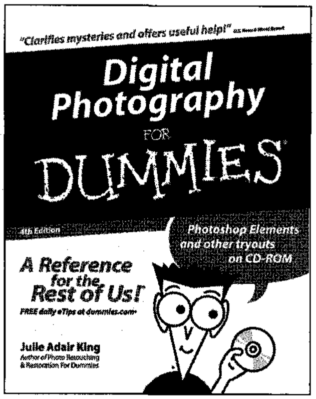
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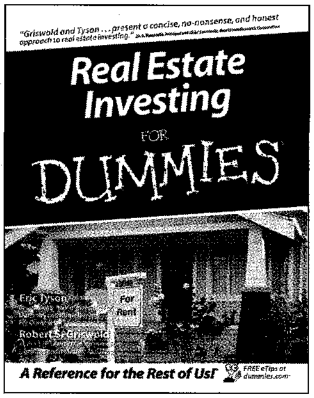
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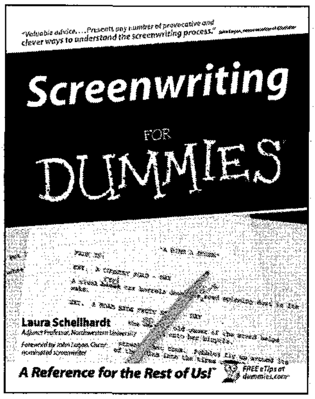
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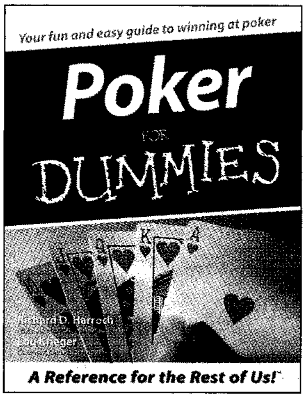
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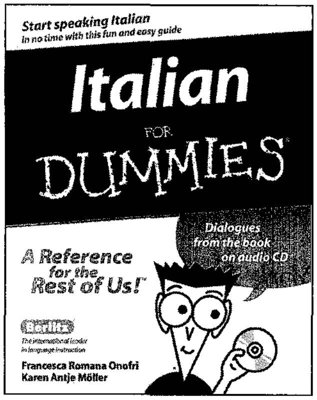
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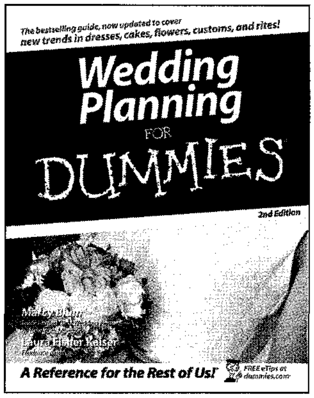
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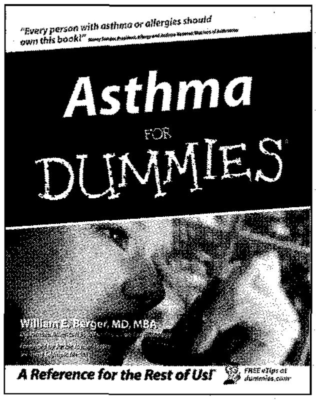
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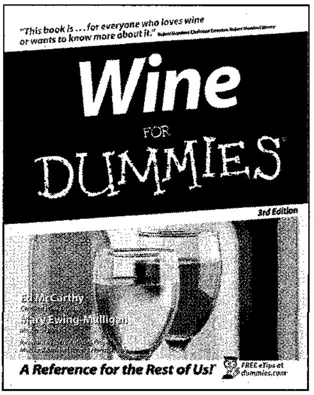
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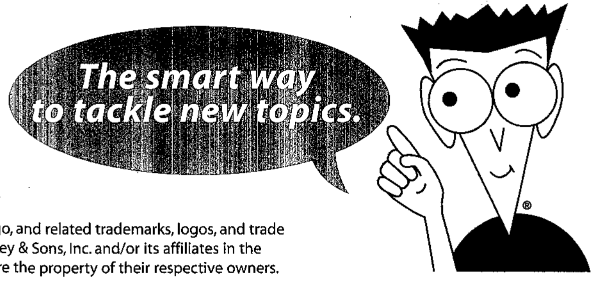
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Havel's mother as a young man, but the two never mentioned these connections. Instead, as the cameras rolled around them, Havel pointed to his shoes. "The quality is terrible," he said. "I am sure you could do much better."

After the Batas fled to Canada, in 1939, they tried to spread the company's philosophy around the world, building little Zlíns in Canada, India, Madagascar, and other countries. But, as the industry shifted to Asia and profit margins crept down, Bata's free clinics and schools began to seem like so much excess overhead. By the late nineteen-eighties, the company was shutting down many of its foreign factories, and gradually shifting from manufacturing to retail. "My son is a Harvard M.B.A.," Sonja Bata told me. "He says, 'Mauritius has never made us a dime. Why are we in Mauritius?' " There was no room for utopias in the modern shoe business.

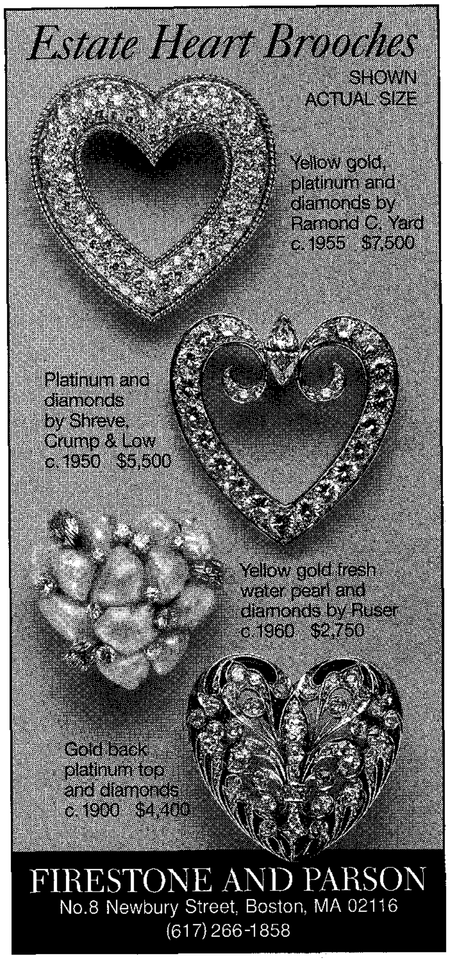
FOLK CITY
TWANG
1965

The day after their meeting with Havel, in Prague, the Batas drove back to the city that Tomas Bata had built, the city of shoes. On the outskirts of town, someone had papered over its Communist name, Gottwaldov, with a sign that said "Zlín." Once again, Thomas Bata, Jr., spoke to cheering crowds in the town square, and once again there were intimations of a new golden age. "They thought the whole town would come back, including the jobs and the shoes for nine crowns ninety-nine," Sonja Bata told me. "But, frankly, it would have killed us to take over." The Batas had long since become Canadians, and Zlín was in no condition to be revived. "There were these huge factories built to export shoes to Russia. The machines were antiquated, and the people . . . They are the major assets, and if they have acquired funny habits . . . " She sighed. "My husband would have said it was a real omelette. And you can't make eggs out of an omelette."

Zlín's sleek modernist factories are mostly empty now. Only one, on the outskirts of town, is still used to make Bata shoes. At the university, the shoe-technology program shrinks a bit every year. During the week of my visit, Hlavacek was moving his office to a smaller room, with lower ceilings, on a floor that Tomas Bata, legend had it, once reserved for architects who screwed up designs for his buildings. "My only error is that I do not bring in enough students," Hlavacek said. In his shoe laboratory, industrial sewing machines stood beside hulking leather-processing devices. Most were painted a pale institutional green and were chipped from decades of use. "Here was concentrated all the knowledge of what needed the feet," Hlavacek said. Then he shook his head. "The shoes are leaving Zlín."

To attract new students and to spread his shoemaking knowledge to where it's needed most, Hlavacek has lately been recruiting in China and Vietnam. The time of eighth-generation Czech cobblers has passed. His son Pavel, who is twenty-four, is getting a master's degree in political science; his daughter Jana, who is twenty-six, is an artist who works with stained glass. (She won a shoe-design competition in high school, but decided there was no future in it.) Still, Hlavacek didn't seem dispirited. "I am naturally optimist," he said. "I think we are really at the bottom of the situation—the decreasing knowledge, the feeling of disillusion. Something must happen. Some butterfly must be quickly moved by the winds. Some pacemaker must start running with a flag, saying, 'Care is coming!' And I believe that it will be better."

One day several years ago, he said, his father broke down in tears. He blamed himself for his son's career. He said that if he hadn't spoken to the principal of the shoe academy forty years before, Petr might have been forced to find a more promising profession. "He said, 'I am guilty you are a shoemaker!' " Petr remembered. "And I said, 'You are not guilty! I am proud!' " Perhaps shoes weren't the most exalted subject in the world (he lifted his hands above his head as if reaching for a book), but he had studied history and medicine, he had become a respected specialist, and he had helped people with their foot problems. "Can you imagine if I was not a shoemaker?" he told his father. "I can't imagine it. I can't imagine my life without shoes." ♦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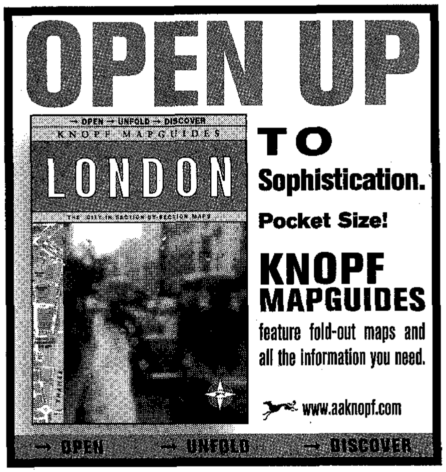
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THE WAYWARD PRESS

FEAR AND FAVOR

Why is everyone mad at the mainstream media?

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

Just before last fall's Presidential election, Bill Keller, the executive editor of the *Times*, and Philip Taubman, the paper's Washington bureau chief, went on the road to inspect the candidates' campaigns. In Florida, on October 22nd, they arranged to have drinks with Karl Rove, the White House's chief political strategist, and Dan Bartlett, its head of communications. It was supposed to be a friendly get-together, and that's how it went for the first few minutes, until Keller asked Rove what he thought of the *Times'* coverage. It's the sort of question that editors often ask important people, in the same spirit that a politician asks, "How'm I doing?," usually hoping for an answer somewhere in the lower-middle range of politeness and candor. But Rove, Keller told me not long ago, "pounded on us for two cocktails' worth of conversation." Saying what? "It was three kinds of things," Keller explained. "It was Bush accomplishments we had ignored, flaws in the Kerry record that we had put inside the paper, and a number of pieces we had done looking hard at the Bush record. In their view, that all amounted to arming the Kerry campaign."

The New York Times
Chicago Tribune
SB '05

Editors like Bill Keller and Ann Marie Lipinski hear the low hum of complaint.

STEVE BRODNER

Keller and I were talking in his office in the *Times* newsroom at nine one morning, a moment when most newspaper offices are empty and expectantly quiet, like a theatre a couple of hours before the curtain. Keller took his time describing the conversation, to suggest that he wasn't dismissing the criticisms out of hand. "Your initial reaction, especially in someone as ferocious as Rove, is to drop into a defensive crouch," he said. "But I try not to do that. I listened, with a fair measure of skepticism, because a lot of it is calculated. But there was some genuineness to it. He went through a long litany of complaints. I do think he was channelling a feeling about the New York *Times* that's out there in the land, that we should be concerned about, or at least aware of."

One item that particularly drew Rove's ire was a *Times* front-page story, by Ford Fessenden, which appeared on September 26th, under the headline "A BIG INCREASE OF NEW VOTERS IN SWING STATES." As Keller remembered it later, in an e-mail message to me, Rove "fired off complaints like a Gatling gun, some specific, some generic, some about specific writers, some about specific elements of specific stories." When I spoke to Rove about his conversation with Keller, it was obvious that, to his mind, the September 26th story was No. 1 among the *Times'* journalistic misdeeds during the campaign. The story left the impression that the Democrats' organization was vastly superior to the Republicans', especially in Florida and Ohio. Getting out the G.O.P. vote in those two states had for several years been one of Rove's main projects, and he spoke about the article in roughly the same tone as a writer discussing a bad review of his magnum opus. He gave me a highly detailed, twelve-point critique, and then, in the interest of conciseness, he boiled down the twelve points to two or three.

According to Rove, the Republicans, in their organizing, had probably far surpassed the Democrats in all of the swing states except Pennsylvania and maybe New Mexico. They had certainly done so in Florida, and arguably in Ohio. The *Times* story had generally relied on Democrats and groups affiliated with the Democratic Party for its information, and had got only pro-forma responses from Republicans. Fessenden had gauged new-voter registration by comparing figures for the first seven months of 2000 and the same period in 2004; framing the data that way favored the Democrats, because their organizing effort hadn't begun seriously until 2004. The Republicans, Rove said, had been organizing since 2001, but a comparison of only the year 2000 with the year 2004 omitted the progress that the Party had made during 2002 and 2003.

Another technique the *Times* had used was surveying new registrants in the most heavily Democratic and Republican Zip Codes in Florida and Ohio. But this, Rove said, was unnecessary in Florida, where voters register by party, and misleading in Ohio, where the Republicans were finding most of their new voters in precincts (not Zip Codes, which aren't political boundaries) that had not voted heavily Republican in the past. Rove felt that the *Times* had allowed itself to be fed by the Democratic organizations. Why did it seem as if so many sloppy errors in the *Times'* political cov-

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CRYSTAL CRUISES

erage favored the Democrats? (Fessenden, when I told him of Rove's complaints, insisted that, rather than accepting the Democrats' version, he had been trying to capture the statistical reality, which was that the biggest increases in registration, in both states, were in urban areas that traditionally voted Democratic regardless of party registration.)

The *Times*, like most of the mainstream media, was given very little access to President Bush during the campaign. (Vice-President Cheney's staff found that it had no room for the *Times* reporter even to travel in the press section of its plane.) It would be facile to say that the Administration had simply written off the *Times*—Rove's level of passion demonstrates that. As Keller wrote to me, "During the campaign, and particularly when things looked close, political strategists for the Republican Party and all of the various allied constituencies did not bypass the 'establishment' press. They sought us out to defend their own causes and often to attempt to plant dirt on the opposition." Still, the *Times'* relations with the Kerry organization were much freer and easier. Keller was among editors and reporters from the *Times* who interviewed the candidate on the road. "The first event I went to was a stem-cell event in New Hampshire," Keller said. "I thought back on Bush's agonizing over that issue—soliciting the advice of clergy—but at this Kerry event the words 'faith,' 'morality,' 'God' never came up. There was not even the implicit suggestion that it was a moral dilemma for many Americans. So I was focussed on this issue of why Kerry didn't talk more about faith. The second stop was a meeting in Philadelphia with black ministers, mostly from Pennsylvania and Ohio, about turnout. He left them *cold.* He didn't even try to connect, or to suggest that they had some kind of bond based on faith." (Rove had complained to Keller and Taubman that the *Times* didn't understand the American who regularly attended church.)

"So, when we finally got some time with Kerry, I wanted to ask him about religion," Keller went on. "Hell, I'm the executive editor, I get to decide on at least the first couple of questions. He was a little nonplussed. He was pretty elusive. A little defensive. He ended up saying, 'I really do believe. I need to talk more about that.' " (After the interview, the *Times* ran a story, with Keller's as the second byline, about Kerry's "visible discomfort in discussing religion.") Kerry did not complain about the *Times'* coverage, and complaints from the Kerry campaign "were smaller-bore" than Rove's, Keller said. He went on, "Where we really got a Rovean level of hostility was from the Howard Dean campaign. They had the true-believer fervor you got from the Bush people. The Kerry people felt more of an affinity—there was a greater level of comfort with them."

Since the election, the mainstream media—tagged as the M.S.M. by bloggers—have conceded a couple of points to Rove: that they failed to appreciate fully the dimensions of the Republican organizing effort; and that they misunderstood the way that the Republican Party's religious base lives and thinks. But the idea that the M.S.M. made these mistakes intentionally, because they had taken sides in the election, makes mainstream-media organizations indignant, and worries them—at a time when there is much else to feel indignant, and worried, about.

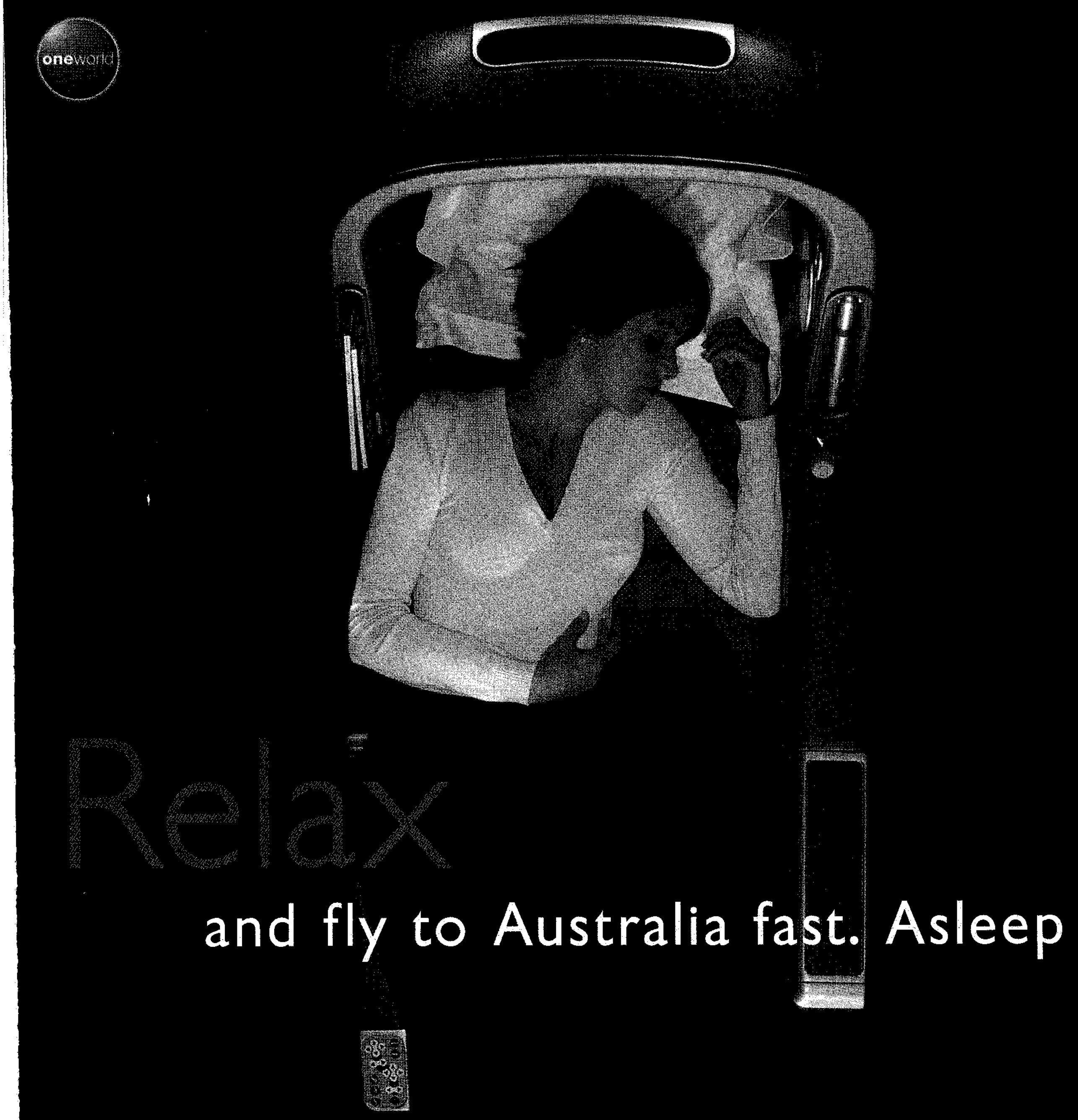
The press in the New World was originally a vehicle for political expression or an unambitious means of disseminating information—or a blend of the two. It also became a form of mass popular entertainment. In the late nineteenth century, the mainstream version of journalism—fair-minded, sometimes aggressive empiricism—emerged in a form that we'd recognize today. It's always perilous to see the past as more placid than the present, because usually it wasn't, but it is accurate to say that by the mid-twentieth century American society had become far more inclined than it is now to respect authority in all realms. The mainstream media, which by then encompassed not only newspapers but national news magazines and network television and radio, occupied a dignified position; and the *Times* was the most dignified outlet of all.

I remember being sent, as a child, from Louisiana on summer visits to my grandparents in New Jersey. My grandfather, who was a pediatrician in the town of Perth Amboy, would sit in his easy chair on Sundays reading the *Times* in a spirit not dissimilar to that of someone taking the sacrament. After finishing one article, he'd begin the next—who was he to decide what, of the material the *Times'* editors had chosen to publish, he had the right to skip? Quite often, the aural accompaniment to this exercise was the soothing sound of WQXR, the *Times'* radio station, which between segments of classical music would occasionally air interviews with *Times* correspondents and critics—men, I inferred from their calm, distinguished voices, with neat Vandyke

THE PROBLEM OF SENTENCES

A sentence is an idea. An idea with urgency.
A feeling for the sun before it rises.
The imagination loves the wall of a building,
loves the floor and the square window
that looks out on it. The scent of jasmine
is how the plant climbs up the wall
built by the Knights of Rhodes.
But the sentence stresses the meaning,
making us notice an unruly jasmine against
the orderly stone wall. We say our bus
went down through the village of the insane,
or that the eucalyptus trees were tall.
That we saw a man dragging a big branch.
The sun will return whether you smile or cry,
clap or burn candles. But when I say *whether,*
the sentence may be thinking, *Even so.*

—*Linda Gregg*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"Hmm . . . any dietary restrictions?"

• •

beards, their heads wreathed in contemplative clouds of pipe smoke.

At least within the mainstream media, the predominant view was that the sixties, which had weakened so many other forms of authority, had strengthened the press. The civil-rights movement, the Vietnam War (in particular, the Pentagon Papers), and Watergate all registered as examples of the big, prestigious journalistic organs asserting themselves, rather than merely passing along what government officials had said, and being rewarded with more power and influence and more admiration from the public. There had always been ideological critiques of the press from both sides—Upton Sinclair's "The Brass Check," the version from the left, was published in 1919—but the mainstream media thought of such criticism as inconsequential.

The White House almost never likes the press. The Nixon Administration, for example, regularly complained about liberal bias, but people in newsrooms didn't agonize much about those complaints. Ben Bradlee, of the Washington *Post,* captured the prevailing sentiment in 1978, when, in a letter to Reed Irvine, of Accuracy in Media, an early conservative press critic, he referred to him as a "miserable, carping retromingent vigilante." Probably most journalists who worked in the mainstream media were liberal, but they were also confident in their professionalism, and believed that they successfully kept their political views out of their work. Even crusading journalism wasn't ideological but moral; Edward R. Murrow's "Harvest of Shame" documentary, which aired in 1960, was aimed at righting a wrong, not at taking sides in an employment dispute between agribusiness and migrant workers. With this history, one can understand why 2004 was such a bad-karma campaign year for the mainstream media, which collectively felt both more harshly attacked and less important—a pair of misfortunes that rarely occur at the same time.

The last few years have seen a series of journalistic scandals—if my grandfather hadn't already been long gone, learning that Jayson Blair had published fabrications in the *Times* would no doubt have finished him off—and forthright self-examinations by the media organizations made it clear that journalism, like everything else, is full of choice and contingency. Such a confession invites more examination, from without and within. To make things worse, newspapers and the network evening-news shows are losing their audiences at an alarming rate, while openly ideological, anti-mainstream-media, quasi-news programs like Rush Limbaugh's radio show have huge followings. The kind of ebullient confidence that Ben Bradlee displayed has, in most places, been superseded by an elaborately polite, pained respect toward anybody who takes issue with press coverage.

E-mail (including orchestrated mass e-mails) and blogs allow press critics to address editors and reporters directly. Both of these innovations were heavily used in 2004. One blog, adamnagourney.com, was devoted to criticizing the *Times*' chief political reporter. A conservative blog called freerepublic.com posted objections to the paper's exposé of America's failure to guard an important munitions dump in Iraq—even before the story, which appeared late in the campaign, was printed—claiming that its central premise was untrue and that its timing was politically motivated. During this campaign cycle, all four major cable-television channels—CNN, Fox, MSNBC, and CNBC—used a talk-intensive format, especially in the evenings, in which ideologically charged press criticism often filled the hours, and where one got to see and hear so many prominent journalists so often that it became more difficult to think of them as neutral reportorial figures. This did not seem to bother viewers: the most overtly political of the cable networks, Fox News, established itself as the clear leader in the ratings.

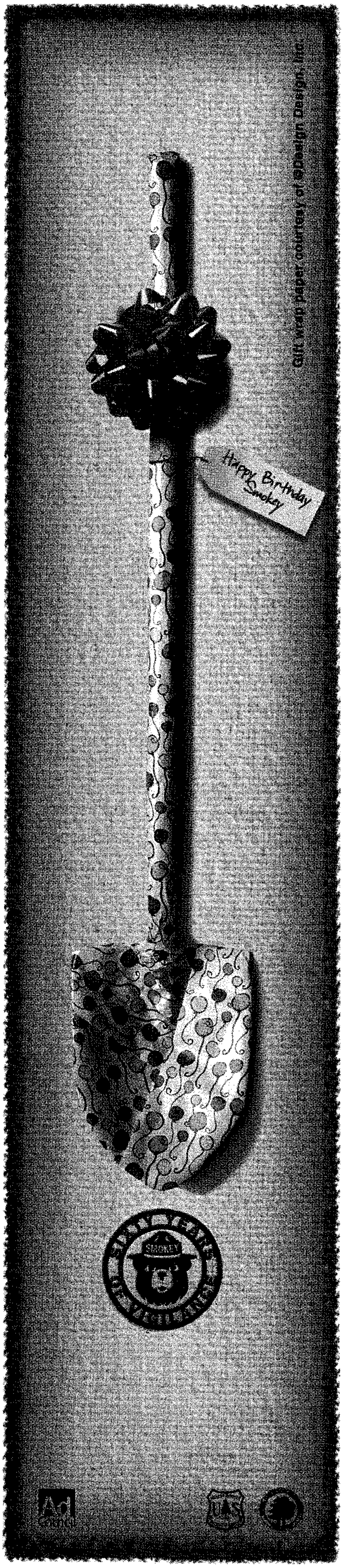
The country was at war—not the kind of war that knits a society together—and appeared to be bitterly divided politically. Politicians—especially conservative politicians, and especially the Bush team—felt free to criticize the press more openly than in past election cycles. Conservatives are relativists when it comes to the press. In their view, nothing is neutral: there is no disinterested version of the news; everything reflects politics and relationships to power and cultural perspective. If mainstream journalists find it annoying that conservatives think of them as unalterably hostile, they find it just as annoying that liberals think of them as the friend who keeps letting them down. Mainstream journalists want to think that the public is aware of—and respects—the boundaries that separate real journalism from entertainment, and opinion, and propaganda, and marketing. If, instead, the public not only enjoys the quasi-journalistic pleasures that lie outside the boundaries, but also doesn't accept that what's inside really is distinct and superior—well, that would sting.

The Chicago *Tribune* has perhaps the grandest office of any American newspaper. It occupies a skyscraper called the Tribune Tower, on the north bank of the Chicago River. Every soaring quotation in the world about the magnificence of journalism appears to have been chiselled into the lobby's marble walls. Back when the *Tribune* was operated by the galumphing conservative Colonel Robert R. McCormick, it was the quintessential Republican newspaper, in a way that one didn't have to read its editorial page to discern, and the self-conscious journalistic impressiveness of its physical setting was considered a source of merriment. Today, by the standard measures of journalism, it is a vastly better paper. It has more bureaus, it wins more awards, it does more investigations and ambitious series, and its news pages are much less nakedly ideological. And its reward, at least last year, was to become beleaguered.

As recently as the Administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, Republican White Houses maintained cordial diplomatic relations with the *Tribune*. In the summer of 2000, the paper published a series criticizing George W. Bush's administration of the death penalty when he was governor of Texas (in recent years, the death penalty has been the *Tribune's* signature issue), and Bush has never given the paper an interview. Last year, the paper did two things that drew furious attacks from conservatives: it published embarrassing material from the previously sealed divorce records of the leading Republican United States Senate candidate in Illinois, Jack Ryan, which led Ryan to drop out of the race and handed the Senate seat to Barack Obama, a Democrat; and the *Tribune's* city editor, William Rood, wrote an admiring memoir of his Swift-boat service in Vietnam with John Kerry, at Kerry's request. Then the paper endorsed Bush, which shouldn't have been surprising (the last Democratic Presidential candidate it endorsed was Horace Greeley, in 1872, and he was running with the backing of a breakaway faction of Republicans), but it drew an equally furious reaction from the other side. More than two thousand *Tribune* readers cancelled their subscriptions in protest of the Bush endorsement; it was an especially cruel blow because, in the preceding six months, the *Tribune* had lost two and a half per cent of its approximately six-hundred-thousand daily circulation.

Those moments stood out, but the paper's editors seem more troubled by the constant low hum of political objection to what they do. During a day I spent there last month, Ann Marie Lipinski, the *Tribune's* editor-in-chief, handed me a copy of a large, ostentatiously grand, and dignified color photograph of President Reagan's funeral service that the paper had run, showing President Bush speaking from the pulpit of the Washington National Cathedral to a big audience. She asked me if I could figure out what someone might find objectionable about it; I tried for a minute and gave up. "Think!" Lipinski said. "Keep trying. You're not being paranoid enough here." I thought some more, and I still couldn't figure it out. "So, Don Wycliff, our public editor"—whose job is to deal directly with reader complaints—"received five phone calls saying that the Arab sitting in the front row"—indeed, there was a man in a burnous visible in the audience—"is sitting with his legs crossed so that his foot is pointing at Bush, which is a sign of disrespect in the Middle East. These readers interpreted the photo to mean that the *Tribune* is anti-Bush. Do you know any editor who, upon seeing that picture, in a million years—I mean, look at that picture! There's a sweep, a unity. It's a newsworthy photo, and also beautiful. The notion that we're sitting here looking for that kind of detail is so beyond any evil imagining of mine! I don't want to suggest that's the daily level of complaint, but not a week goes by that we don't get something like that."

A few days before my visit, the *Tribune's* Sunday magazine had published a memoir by a woman who had been unable to get health insurance because she suffers from depression. Lipinski



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walked across her office to her desk and played back a voice-mail message she had received in response to the story. A woman's voice said, "I'm really quite disgusted with the article on the uninsured. I think it's very socialistic. Health care is not a right in this country. We are not Sweden and we are not Canada. I do not like these heart-tugging stories about people who don't have health care. . . . Are you a socialist? . . . I do not appreciate these insipid little stories that say, 'Oh, this poor person who doesn't have health care.' . . . I know friends and family who are really upset with the leftist tendencies of your coverage." At this point, the voice-mail system timed out; it sounded as if the woman would gladly have kept going. "I get surprised," Lipinski said. "Even something like this is seen through a political lens, rather than as, Here's somebody with a different experience from me."

I spoke to the heads of several large news organizations, and all of them maintained that they get attacked from both political sides, and agreed that both the amplitude and the frequency of the attacks seem to be increasing. Bill Keller wrote, in an e-mail, "There is a significant liberal antipathy toward the, pardon the expression, mainstream press. . . . Liberals perceive us, or claim to perceive us, as lapdogs of the Bush Administration, instigators of the war in Iraq, sellouts to big business and panderers to red-state prejudices. Some of this is probably disingenuous—calculated Mau-Mauing." But, if the question is which side is more full-throated, the only editor I spoke to who thought he heard more criticism from the left than from the right in 2004—and that was because of complaints about coverage of the Iraq war—was Leonard Downie, Jr., the executive editor of the Washington *Post*. Downie had one sit-down meeting with people concerned about the *Post's* reporting—a group from the Kerry campaign, who had come to try, unsuccessfully, to influence a story that Michael Dobbs was working on about the claims made by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. They had sensed in advance what the piece, which appeared in August, suggested: that Kerry and the pro-Bush group had been less than candid about Kerry's military service. The other editors seemed more aware of critics on the right—partly because there are more of them, and partly because they represent the winning team in American politics—and they insisted that they try to present the news without bias. Some said that they don't even know the political views of their colleagues. That raises the question of how, if the reality is what the editors say it is, the perception can be so different.

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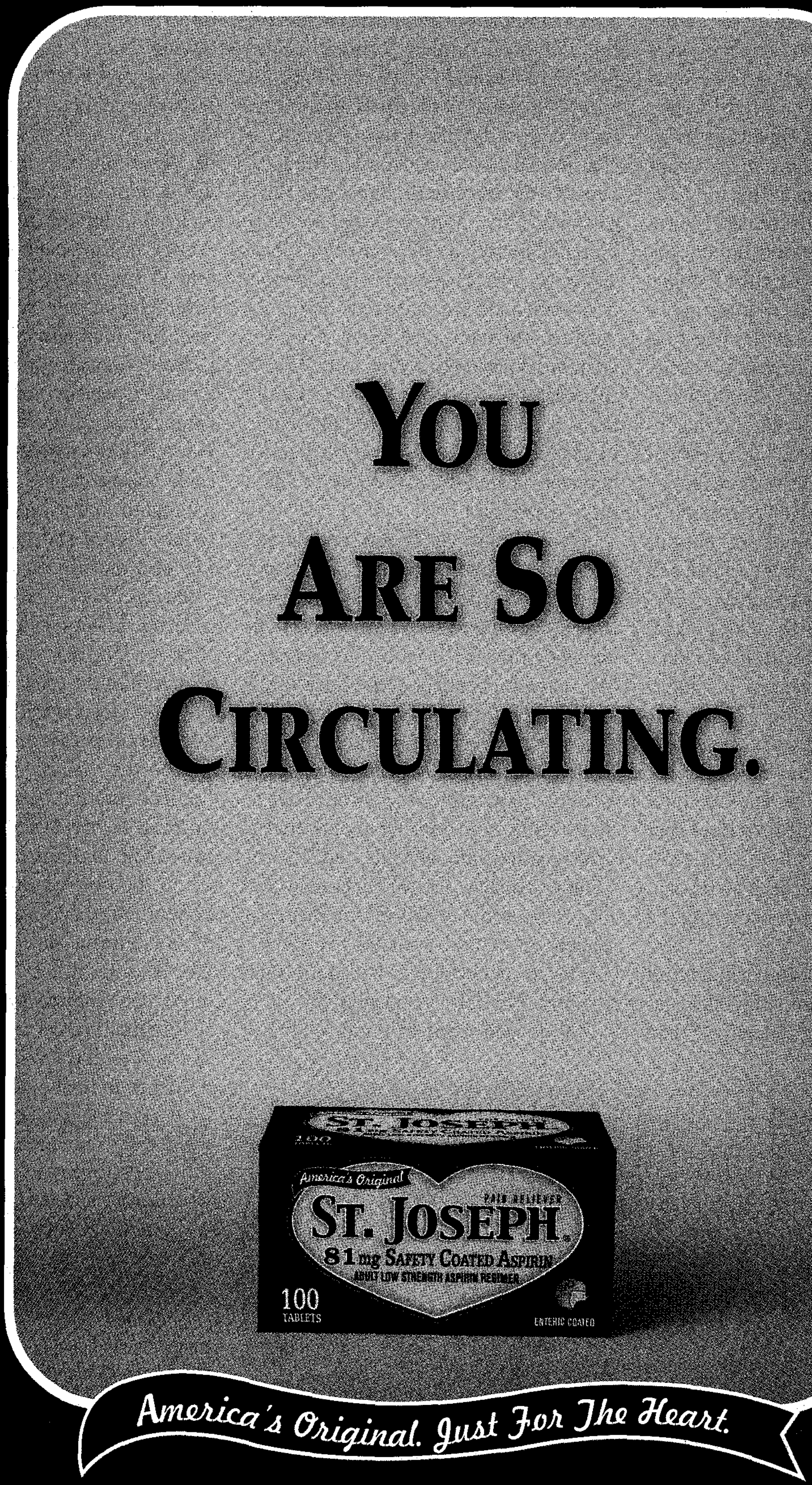
OMFUG
1975

After cautioning me not to treat conservatism as monolithic, Bill Keller wrote, "I think conservatives feel this way in part because for years they've been told they should feel this way. In a more concerted way than liberal critics, conservative critics have castigated major newspapers, especially ours, and network news broadcasts. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, the pundit choir at Fox News, right-wing columnists and talk-radio hosts, conservative authors, the scholars and opinion-mongers of Heritage and Hoover, and a fair number of conservative officeholders have made it a mantra—'the liberal press.' I'm far from being a conspiracy theorist, but I think this has been deliberate and I think it has some effect, especially on people who don't actually read the New York *Times*." He went on, "Some of this is played up for commercial or political effect. Ailes and Murdoch"—Roger Ailes, the chairman of Fox News, and Rupert Murdoch, its owner—"have found and exploited a slice of America that feels left out, and part of their marketing effort entails bashing us. Fox's claim to be 'fair and balanced'—the most ingeniously cynical slogan in the history of media marketing—is premised on the notion that 'those other guys have a liberal agenda.' "

However, Keller, who is himself of indeterminate politics but is probably more conservative than his fiery populist predecessor, Howell Raines, went on, "Conservatives feel estranged because they feel excluded. They do not always see themselves portrayed in the mainstream press as three-dimensional humans, and they don't see their ideas taken seriously or treated respectfully. This is something I've long felt we should correct, not to pander to red-state readers but because it's bad journalism to caricature anyone with reductionist portraits and crude shorthand. . . . Portraying conservatives fairly does not mean equal time for creationism. But it does mean, for example, writing about abortion in a way that does justice to the deep moral qualms most Americans have about it. It means trying to understand the thinking of people who regard gay marriage as unacceptable, who worry that gun controls represent an encroachment on their civil liberties."

From conservatives, you get a view of the mainstream media which echoes Keller's second point, though it doesn't sound quite so anthropological. Ed Gillespie, who stepped down the day before Inauguration Day as the chairman of the Republican National Committee, told me, "One of the reasons journalists think they're playing it straight is that in the article they tend to play 'He said, she said.' But, when you look at the story selection itself, it's indicative of a view that slants to the left." Editors will know exactly what Gillespie means: all the ones I spoke to have, like Lipinski, had bewildering encounters with readers, especially conservatives, who saw evidence of political bias that hadn't occurred to them. *Time*, like the *Tribune*, once stood as a symbol of the Republican press; Henry Luce, its founder, was probably the most powerful Republican press lord in American history. But *Time* is now either neutral or liberal, depending on whom you ask. Jim Kelly, the managing editor, told me that he'd bumped into a reader who complained about a *Time* cover with a photograph of Osama bin Laden, and then a smaller photograph in the corner, to advertise a different story, about Al Gore. In the picture Gore was smiling—at the Bush Administration's misfortune in failing to find bin Laden, the reader thought. "This is so wacky to me," Kelly said. "But it's weirdly compelling to listen to."

Conservatives take it as axiomatic that if most reporters employed in the mainstream media are liberal in their voting habits and their cultural outlook, that's all you need to know about them. "There are very few reporters with whom I'm friends and spend time," Ed Gilles-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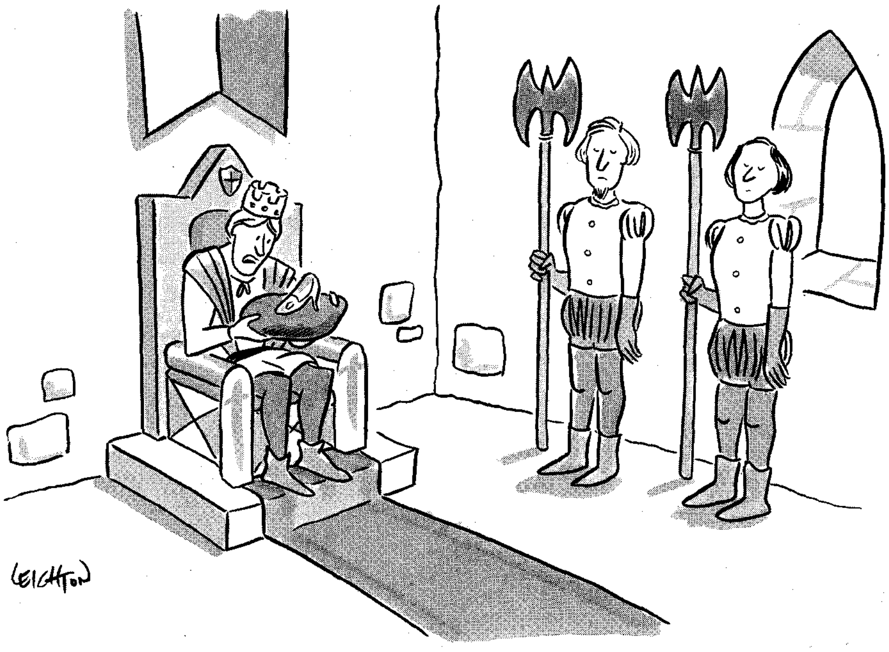
pie said. "Many in the élite media, to the extent that they relate to people in politics—at school, at dinner parties—tend to do that with Democrats, not Republicans. Socially, we're not likely to swim in the same pond." Among mainstream journalists, the response to this is: O.K., yes, most reporters are liberal, but they're also capable of doing work that doesn't display their politics. At the *Tribune,* James Warren, the deputy managing editor for features (and a regular guest on Fox News), told me, "There is a consensus in newsrooms, and it's distinctly left of center. I suspect an overriding majority of the newsroom voted for Kerry—though up on the executive floor, a majority voted for Bush. But people don't realize the huge amount of content out there that's pretty value-free." He picked up the Metro section of that day's *Tribune* and showed me the front page. "Look at this! I'm not sure how ideology plays into the governor closing a dump." He picked up the Tempo section, which had a cover story on luggage with rollers. "I think the reporter who wrote that is liberal," he said. "I think she voted for Kerry. But how does that play into this piece? They don't realize that ninety-nine per cent of folks in journalism aren't opining or covering the White House."

Warren was frustrated that what seems obvious to him and his colleagues evidently doesn't to their audience. "We've done significant research with readers of the Tribune Company's three big papers, the *Tribune*, *Newsday*, and the L.A. *Times*," he said. "There was an increasingly visceral distrust in us—a stated, increasing lack of confidence in the local papers, very consistent across the three markets. They didn't see what we were doing as materially different from local TV news—that was depressing. People don't associate investigative reporting with us, but with local news. They see what we do as no different from 'Could this pastrami sandwich kill you? Could this screen door harm your child? Tune in at ten!' They don't see any difference between an investigative reporter and a blow-dried idiot."

Don Wycliff, the *Tribune's* public editor, said, "I just think the people out there who write to me, who call me, they do not have the governors on their behavior that we have in our industry. We may be liberals, but we have ideals of objectivity to which we aspire. My friend Russ"—a conservative reader from Naperville, Illinois, who e-mails Wycliff frequently—"he doesn't have to do that. He owes nothing to objectivity." On the other side, Wycliff said, "there's a fellow who lives up in Evanston, where I live, who wrote to us after the Bush endorsement. 'I and none of my friends can figure out why you had done such a thing.' His letter captured the type. 'Why do you want to endorse such a dimwit?' I'll tell you, that's the most annoying aspect of the liberal equivalent of Russ, that intellectual condescension. It drives me nuts."

Most mainstream-media organizations, worried at being culturally and politically out of synch with many Americans, are making an effort to reach out—I frequently heard a promise to cover religion more seriously and sympathetically. For many, that's a business imperative, an attempt to broaden the audience, especially among conservatives. Neal Shapiro, the president of NBC News, whose variegated domain includes cable television, and even blogs, plainly felt that the nightly news broadcast needs to have its red-state credentials in order. He said of NBC's new anchor, Brian Williams, "He's a great journalist, a great reporter. Having said that, he's a huge NASCAR fan, has been since his father took him to the track when he was a kid. He cares a lot about his faith. He wants to take the broadcast on the road a lot. He was on the road the whole week before the inauguration. Brian does get it. He once did a story on Cabela's"—the superstore chain for hunters. "A lot of the people in the newsroom said, 'Gee I didn't know about that.' But he did. And many of our bureaus did. We're not just the Northeast Corridor." One doesn't get the sense that Shapiro worries about the possibility that NBC's anchor might be out of touch with the values and concerns of residents on the Upper West Side.

A better understanding of conservatives seems manageable, but there is another possibility, which is much more worrisome, at least to journalists who work in the mainstream media. It is that during the years of heavy shelling—through impeachment and the Florida recount and then the rough 2004 campaign—what they consider their compact with the public has been seriously damaged. Journalism that is inquisitive and intellectually honest, that surprises and unsettles, didn't always exist. There is no law saying that it must exist forever, and there are political and business interests that would be better off if it didn't exist and that have worked hard to undermine it. This is what journalists in the mainstream media are starting to worry about: what if people don't believe in us, don't want us, anymore? ♦



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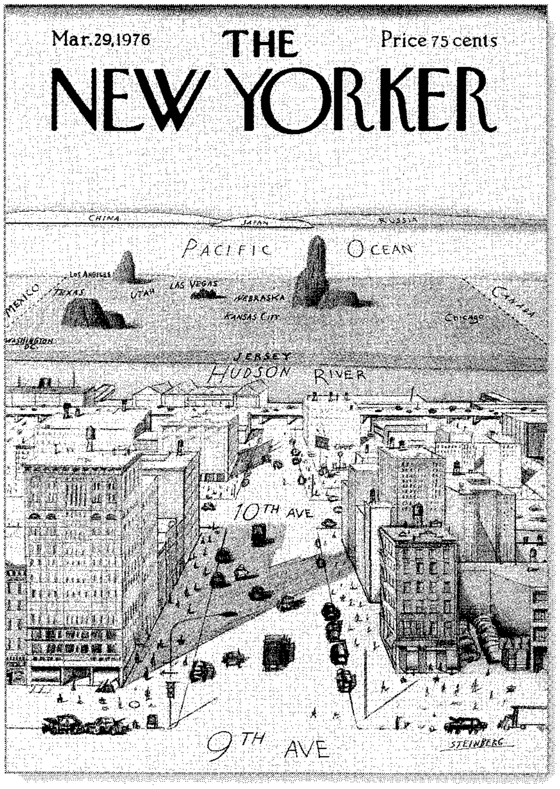
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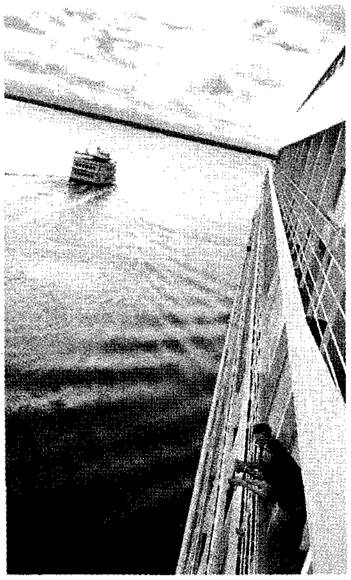

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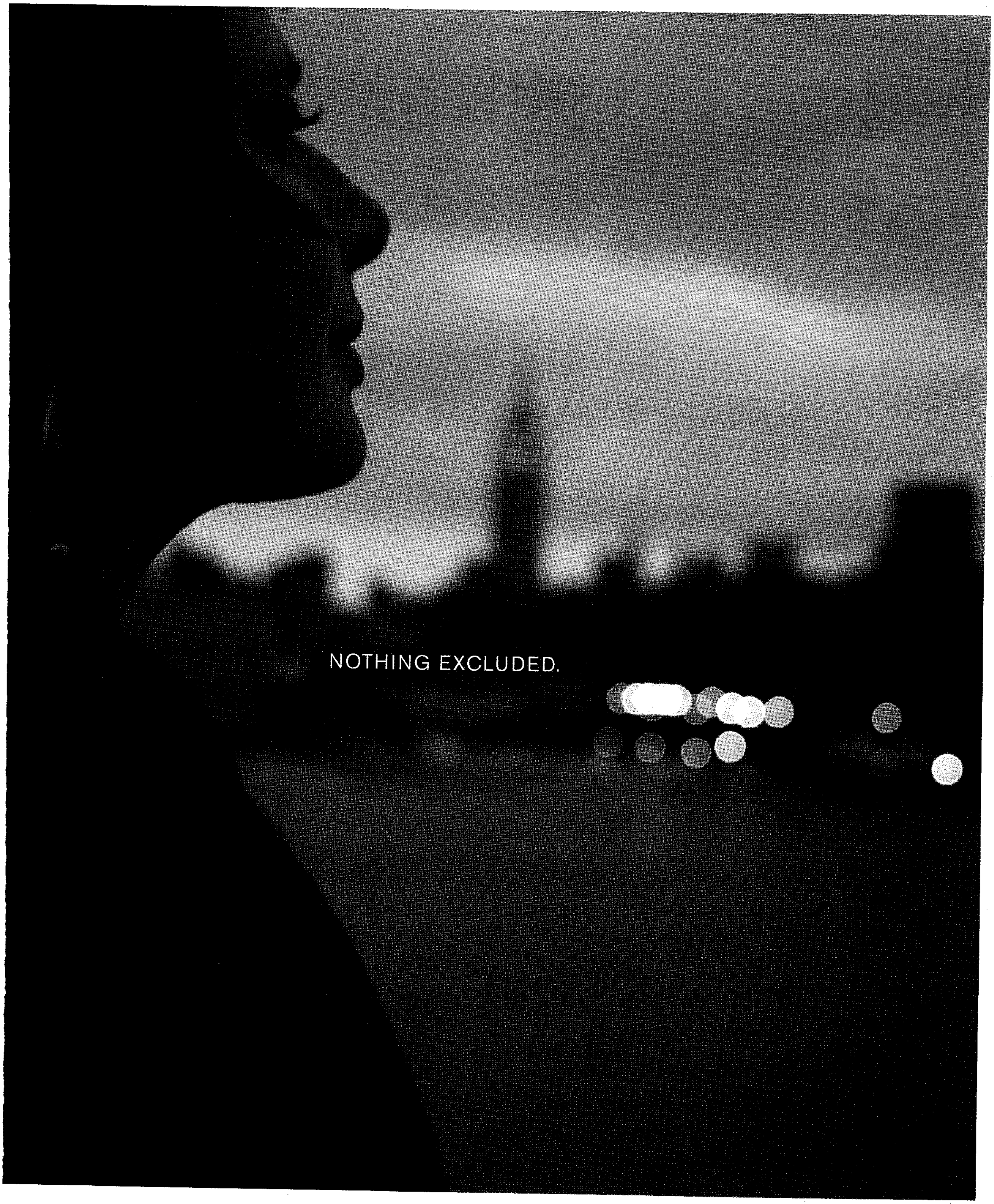
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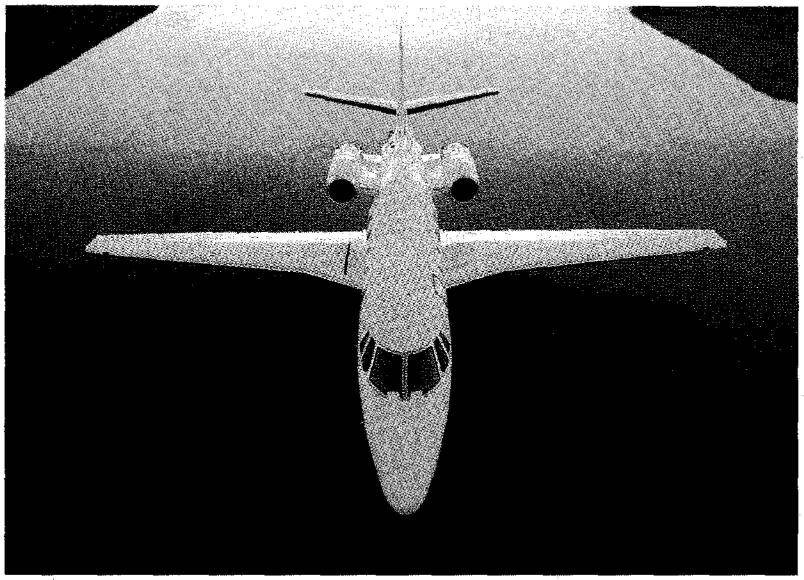

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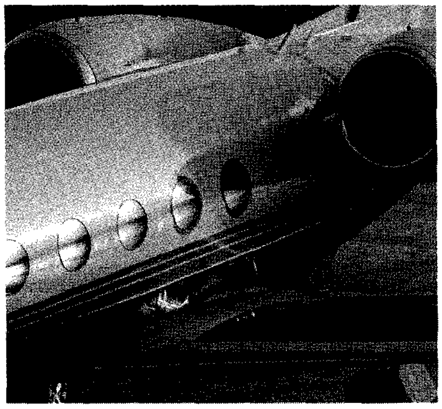

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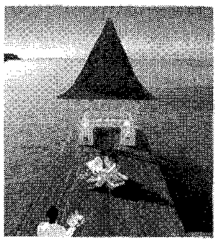

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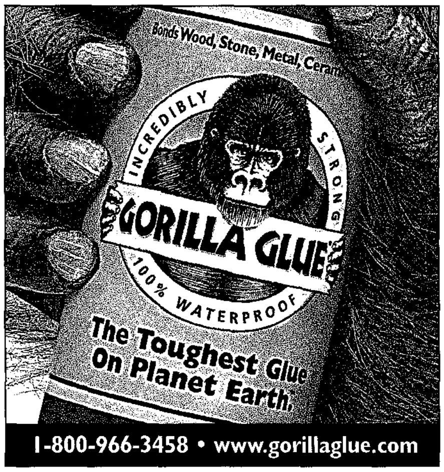

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ANNALS OF DETECTION

LOST DOG

What to do if someone steals your pet.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

On August 6, 2003, Stephen Morris parked his car at the Atlanta History Center, expecting to spend half an hour or so edifying himself and his nephew on the particulars of the Civil War. It was the beginning of what would turn out to be a very bad day. At the time, though, everything seemed fine. Morris, a sinewy guy in his fifties with a scramble of light-brown hair and the deliberative air of a non-practicing academic, was at work on his doctoral dissertation—a biography of William Young, a seventeenth-century composer in the court of the Archduke of Innsbruck. Morris's teen-age nephew was visiting from British Columbia, and Morris had taken a break to show him the highlights of Atlanta. Morris's wife, Beth Bell, a compact, gray-haired, dry-witted epidemiologist whose specialty is hepatitis, was at her job at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where she is a senior investigator; that day, she was knee-deep in a disease outbreak among attendees of jam-band concerts.

Morris found parking at the History Center easily enough—the open-air three-story garage is small but had plenty of available spaces. A sign above the entrance reads, "Help Us Keep Your Vehicle Safe While You Are Here. Please Remove All Valuables From Vehicle," but the History Center is in Buckhead, a prosperous, bosky section of the city where people and vehicles are generally out of harm's way. Morris and Bell's car—a dinged-up but serviceable 1999 Volvo station wagon—was not the sort to attract much attention anyway. The only noteworthy thing about the car was that Morris and Bell's dog, Coby—a black Border collie with a false hip and a missing tooth—was in it, and so was a rather nice viola da gamba that Morris was looking after in his capacity as a rental-program director of the Viola da Gamba Society of America.

August 6th was a hot, soupy Wednesday in Atlanta. On Coby's behalf, Morris left the car in the History Center garage with its doors locked but with the engine running and the air-conditioner on—a bit of animal husbandry that is not unheard of in Southern climates if you leave your dog in a parked car and don't want to return to find him cooked. Uncooked dog notwithstanding, an unoccupied but idling car in a relatively empty parking garage might present to a certain kind of person an irresistible temptation. But if anyone saw such a person in the vicinity, he didn't make an impression. Meanwhile, Morris and his nephew wandered through the cool, white halls of the museum, did a quick appraisal of the War Between the States, and then got ready to leave. At first, they thought they had misremembered where they'd parked the car, but after looking through the whole garage they came back to where they were sure they had left it. The Volvo, the viola da gamba, and the dog were gone. All that marked the spot was a glittering blue sprinkle of broken glass.

Around eighty cars are stolen in greater Atlanta every day—a steady but not exceptional amount, putting the city's number of disappearing cars a little behind Houston's and a little ahead of Seattle's. Most of the thefts reward the perpetrator with, in addition to a car, nothing more than a couple of cassette tapes, some fast-food flotsam, and a clutch of exhausted air fresheners. Stephen Morris and Beth Bell's car, though, offered its unusual booty of dog and viola da gamba. The best guess is that the thief never even noticed; he was probably too excited about finding a car with a key in the ignition to take stock of its contents. Morris and Bell were upset about losing the viola da gamba—it was a fine reproduction of a fifteenth-century instrument and worth thousands of dollars—and they were not happy about losing their car, but those were trifling concerns compared with how they felt about losing their dog. In the report that Morris filed as soon as police arrived at the History Center, he didn't even mention the viola da gamba, but he brought up Coby's kidnapping a number of times.

Generally speaking, people love their dogs. Morris and Bell may be particularly devoted to Coby because they have nursed him through a variety of misadventures. They first spotted him at a sheepherding event nearly seven years ago when they were out bicycling in the Georgia countryside, but the breeder had promised the puppy to someone else, then decided that she wanted him for herself. Only after a day of negotiating did Coby end up with Morris and Bell. By the time he was two, he had full-blown dysplasia in his hips and needed a four-thousand-dollar surgery to replace one of them. At two and a half, he busted a tooth playing catch. Sometime later, he caught a stick wrong, and it jammed down his throat a few millimetres from his windpipe. Coby's vet likes to describe him as a dog with nine lives. In this life, anyway, Coby is a bushy-haired, prick-eared dog with tensed shoulders, an arresting stare, and an avid fetch-centric attitude. His dedication to retrieving bounceable rubber objects is so inexhaustible that it is exhausting. He has worn a deep, dusty path in Bell and Morris's yard between where they like to stand when they throw his Kong toy and where he likes to lie in wait for it. Morris has, thanks to Coby, developed a hot pitching arm and a firm way of saying, "That will do, Coby," when he runs out of steam.

Coby is a bushy-haired dog with an arresting stare and an avid fetch-centric attitude. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

GETTY IMAGES

So here was the problem: a dog on foot can travel at about five miles an hour, but a dog in a car can travel at sixty or seventy miles an hour. If Coby had jumped out of the car and walked away from the History Center, a perimeter of his possible whereabouts could have been plotted according to his likely pace. If he was still in the car—well, there was no way of knowing where he might be. Within an hour or two, he could have been in Alabama or South Carolina or Tennessee. Epidemiological science was of some help. That evening, a number of Bell's C.D.C. colleagues joined Morris, who had set out to search the thirty-three acres of the History Center and the surrounding area. "We were in the hypothesis-generation stage of the investigation," Bell said recently. "We first developed the hypothesis that Coby might still be at the History Center." Bell advanced the theory that the guy who had taken the car did not want a dog, and that it was likely that as soon as he noticed Coby he let him out. Her secondary theory was that as soon as the thief broke the window to get in, Coby had escaped. Both theories led to the Tullie Smith Farm—an antebellum homestead on the grounds of the History Center, where maidens in muslin churn butter and dip candles, and which, in the interest of total authenticity, also features a small herd of sheep. Border collies love sheep, so the crew of epidemiologists headed straight for the farm, and went there the next day, too. "We looked around and didn't see Coby, but we stopped everyone who passed us," one of the searchers told me. "We got some interesting responses. We approached one older woman and asked her if she had seen the dog, and she said no. Then she said that she had just lost her family and she asked us if we'd seen them." The search party hung some hastily made

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posters on light poles; they checked around trash cans and Dumpsters; they flagged down cars driving past on West Paces Ferry Road; they crisscrossed the History Center's Mary Howard Gilbert Memorial Quarry Garden and its Victorian Playhouse and its Swan Woods Trail. They searched until eleven on Wednesday, and most of the day Thursday, but there was no dog, and no sign of the dog.

In all sorts of circumstances, dogs go missing. They slip out the door with trick-or-treaters; they burrow under fences; they take off after unattainable squirrels and pigeons. Some dogs are repeat offenders. Recently, I heard the story of Huey and Dewey—Shetland-sheepdog siblings living in Massachusetts—who took exception to a visit to the veterinarian and ran off. Huey was recovered a quarter mile from the clinic by a dog-search volunteer after forty-three days, but Dewey was gone for good. A year and a half after that, Huey took exception to a visit to a kennel and was found eighty-nine days later a few feet from where she'd escaped. Sometimes a dog, presumed irretrievable, unexpectedly reappears: a certain Doberman pinscher from San Francisco, capable of standing on its head, vanished for three years; his owner finally located him when she overheard a waiter in a restaurant discussing his roommate's new dog, a Doberman with a knack for standing on its head. According to the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association, there are sixty-five million pet dogs in this country, and an estimated ten million of them go astray every year. About half of those are returned. Others end up in new homes under assumed names, or are killed by cars; most, though, disappear without a trace.

Dog-identification contraptions are a gigantic subset of the gigantic $34.3-billion-a-year pet-care industry. Aside from tags shaped like hearts and stars and hydrants in aluminum, gold, steel, and rhinestone, there is a brisk business in microchip tags—grain-size data-bearing devices that are implanted under the skin between an animal's shoulder blades. Microchips were introduced in the early eighties; AVID Identification Systems, of Norco, California, one of the largest microchip companies in the world, now has more than eleven million pets in its international database, and HomeAgain, another major microchip supplier, has chips in close to three million. And GPS Tracks, a Jericho, New York-based company, will soon introduce the world's first global-positioning system for dogs—a fist-size transmitter called a GlobalPetFinder, which will attach to the animal's collar and transmit its exact location every thirty seconds to a cell phone, computer, or a P.D.A. Before the device was even officially announced, the company had a waiting list of more than three thousand customers. "One night, it was pouring rain, my dogs had run away, the kids were hysterically crying, and I thought, This has to stop," Jennifer Durst, the founder and C.E.O. of GPS Tracks, said recently. "If they have Lo-Jack for cars, why can't there be a Lo-Dog for dogs?"

Coby, regrettably, had neither a microchip implant nor an early-release prototype of GlobalPetFinder. He wasn't even wearing his rabies tag, which is one more chance for an animal to be identified. Coby wears a nylon collar printed with his name and phone number and bearing his rabies tag, but Bell and Morris take it off every night so that Coby can sleep in the nude; that particular day, Morris hadn't put the collar on because he expected that the History Center trip would be brief and that Coby would be safely cosseted in the car. So the dog was now at large and anonymous, and everything that could identify him was at home, in a basket by the back door of Bell and Morris's sprawling split-level in Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta.

After Wednesday night's fruitless search, Bell decided that it was time to accelerate into an outbreak investigation—that is, to apply the same techniques she uses when analyzing, say, a wave of contagion among methamphetamine users in Wyoming. She and Morris blast-faxed Atlanta-area animal shelters, local rescue groups, and nearby veterinarian offices. They listed Coby on many of the almost countless Internet lost-pet sites: PetFinder; Pets 911; Pets Missing in Action; FindFido; Petznjam; K9Finder; Dog Tracer; Lassie Come Home. They made hundreds of posters, and on Thursday hung them in high-volume, highly animal-sensitive areas like the parking lots of pet stores. They also hung them along Peachtree Road, which cuts diagonally through northeast Atlanta and is lined with the city's busiest restaurants and bars. Bell reasoned that it was one of the few places in Atlanta where people travel on foot—in other words, at a speed allowing for a close reading of a lost-dog poster.

They got responses immediately. A woman in northern Gwinnett County, about an hour's drive away, called to say that she had found a dog loosely fitting Coby's description; Bell and Morris drove up to take a look, but he turned out to be a Border collie someone else had lost. A woman called from Alabama, but the dog she had found was a small white poodle. The phone kept ringing—some of the calls reported dog-sightings, some

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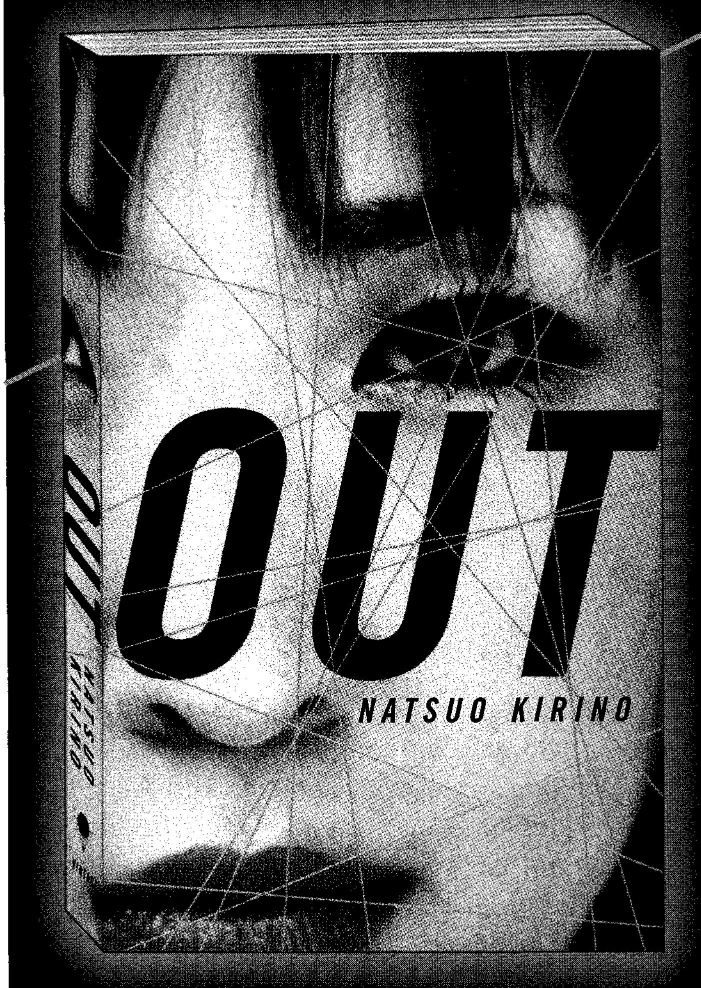

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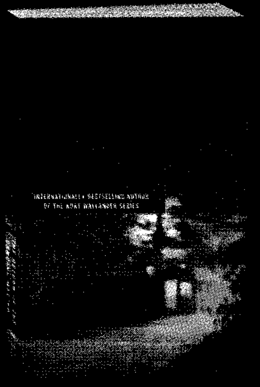

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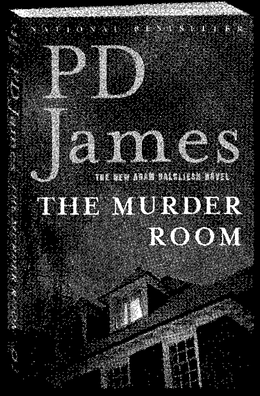

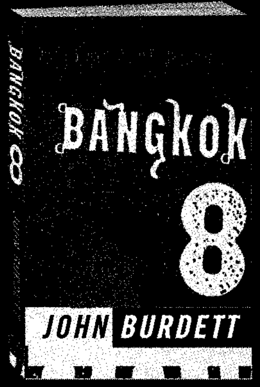

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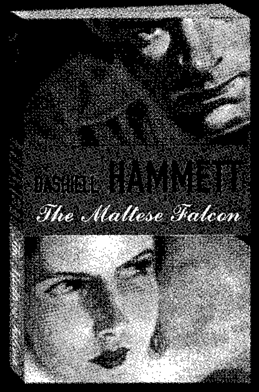

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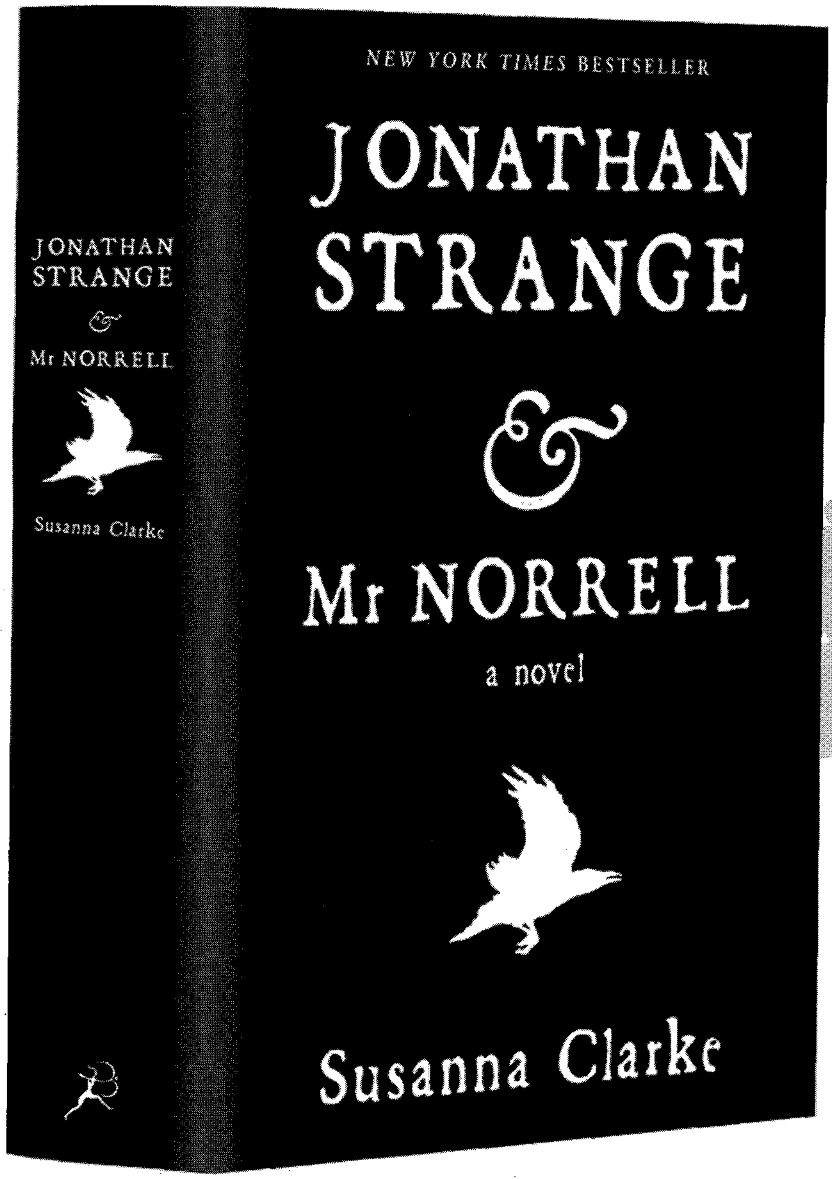

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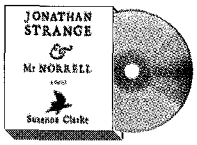

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offered advice, many were from people who had also lost dogs and just wanted to commiserate. Bell and Morris were also flooded with e-mails:

> Hi, This is Amy. . . . I'm so sorry to hear about this tragedy.

> Maybe the thieves put him out in Buckhead, but who knows? Wonder why the dog was left in a car on a HOT summer day??????

> I'm sorry your dog is missing, what a sad story.

On Thursday and Friday, they visited animal shelters around Atlanta to make sure that Coby wasn't waiting among the errant terriers and golden retrievers in the urban pounds, or the pit bulls and hounds languishing in shelters out of town. Bell realized that it was also time to start checking with the city employee who was assigned the unpleasant task of cataloguing each day's roadkill. "When you're searching for something, you never know what you're going to find," she said recently. "But you do have to ask the question."

One other question was whether to look for help elsewhere. The cohort of people with lost pets is large and constantly renewed, and forms a significant and often free-spending market to be served. In fact, one of the best-known lost-pet detectives in the country, Sherlock Bones, got into the business on a price-per-pound basis. Fed up with a job in the insurance industry, Bones, whose civilian name is John Keane, decided to start his own business but wasn't sure what to pursue until he noticed an ad for a lost Chihuahua. Keane said that the ad was an epiphany. "There was a thousand-dollar reward for that Chihuahua," he told me recently. "I thought to myself, That's five hundred dollars a pound." Keane, who started Sherlock Bones twenty-nine years ago and now operates out of Washougal, Washington, works on about five hundred cases a year. He used to do ground searches but now limits his involvement to consulting and to producing materials—primarily posters and mailers—for bereft owners. "Doing actual searches was very stressful," he said. At the time we spoke, he was out for a morning walk with his own dog, a French briard, and he was puffing lightly as he talked. "You're dealing with people in crisis. It's a serious business, since after eight hours it is unlikely someone will find their pet themselves, unless they're very lucky. They need help from someone who has the right information. You don't go to a rabbi to learn how to play baseball." He specializes in dogs and cats. "I don't deal with infrequent animals," he said. "Although I did make up a poster for a lost llama once, named Fernando Llama."

Bell and Morris decided to call Bones on Monday if they hadn't had any success; they also got in touch with a volunteer dog searcher named Debbie Hall, a member of a loose community of people across the country who trace lost pets for free. Hall helped them redesign their flyer, suggesting that they describe their car as well as the dog, and sent them extensive recommendations—eight long documents—on pet searches. Hall and her husband live in southeastern Massachusetts with a Yorkie-Chihuahua mix, a Yorkie-poodle mix, and three parakeets, two of which they got as a gift and a third that is probably someone's lost pet, because it just showed up in their yard one day. An entire room in the Halls' house is taken up by pet-detective appurtenances—a rack of camouflage clothes, a few Havahart traps, and half a dozen notebooks detailing her searches. Hall often stays out all night on cases. "It's a long-ass day," she explained, "but I love what I do. This is the one thing in my life that I'm good enough at to call my work." It has not been without its mishaps. She had a gun pulled on her while searching for a German shepherd in Virginia and once got trapped in her own six-foot Havahart trap. Worst of all, she has spent countless days mourning dogs that she found only after they had died. "It still hurts," she said, flipping to a page in her notebook about her first case—Tia, a runaway Border collie who eventually was found drowned. "But I am always optimistic that you will find your dog."

Late Saturday night, three days after Coby had disappeared, Bell and Morris got a break. A young guy walking down Peachtree had noticed one of their posters, and called to say that a few days earlier he had been playing rugby in a park downtown and had seen a dog that looked like Coby. "He said a man had been walking around the park with the dog, saying someone had just dropped it off," Bell said.

First thing Sunday morning, Bell and Morris headed over to the park, a weary-looking plot of land in a hard-

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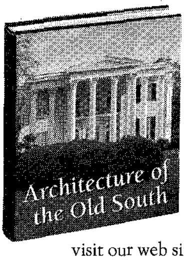

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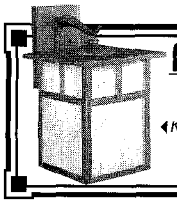

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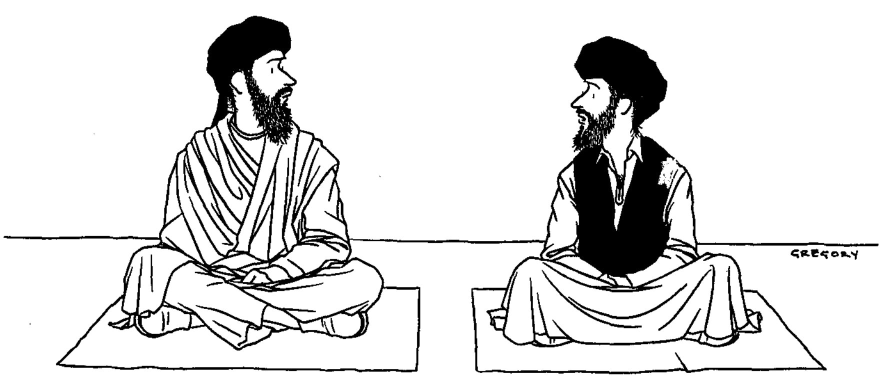
luck section of the city known as Old Fourth Ward. At the nearby Tabernacle Baptist Church and Mount Sinai Baptist Church, services were just ending, so Bell and Morris stopped and asked if anyone there had seen the dog, but no one had. They walked down Boulevard, the wide road on the western edge of Old Fourth Ward, past men playing dice in mini-mart parking lots and loitering in front of signs saying, "Private Property Do Not Sit On Wall." They passed out flyers and asked after Coby. "My brother has that dog," one of the men told Bell. "If you give me two dollars, I'll go get him." Someone else said he'd played catch with the dog. Bell and Morris handed out more flyers. A young man took one, walked away, and then turned on his heel and came back to talk to them. He said that his name was Chris Walker and that he didn't know anything about the dog, but he did know something about their car: he had seen it near the park over the last few days, and he recognized the driver because they'd been in police detention together a few months earlier.

"This guy Chris was a true scientist," Bell said, admiringly. "He said there were only three other people released from detention with him. One was Egyptian, one was elderly, and the third was the car thief, and that all we needed to do was get the detention records, eliminate those other two, and we would end up with this guy's name." Walker insisted that they call the police right away, so that they could check his story. He waited with them for almost an hour until a cruiser responded, and was disgusted that the police didn't have a computer in the car that could review detention records on the spot. Walker was so determined to have his tip substantiated that he accompanied Bell and Morris to a nearby precinct house to see if a police officer there would pull up the records. The officer wouldn't oblige them but he did believe that Walker was telling the truth, and he suggested that Morris and Bell contact Midtown Blue, an organization of police officers who do security work when they're off duty, which he thought might help them. Morris and Bell gave Walker reward money, but he seemed more interested in making sure that they followed up on his tip. "It's a family curse," Walker's uncle Lee Harris told me when I visited him last summer. "We'll just bend over backward to help anyone in pain." Later that Sunday, after leaving Bell and Morris, Walker tangled with a police officer again, and on Monday, when he called Bell to find out if she'd found her car, he was calling from jail.

As astonishing as Walker's story seemed, Bell and Morris came to believe that he had indeed seen their car, and that, from what the rugby player who had called them from Peachtree had told them, the thief had let the dog out in the park. On a shallow slope near the playing fields, they talked to the homeless people who sleep there under a small stand of oak trees, and they all remembered Coby. Some of those same people were still in the park this summer when I went to Atlanta. It was another blistering day; someone was listlessly banging tennis balls against a wall, and muffled cheers and hollers from a soccer game at the far end of the park rose up in the heavy air. Under a cement pavilion in a sliver of shade, a man was sitting on a bench, plunking on a guitar held together with duct tape. He said that his name was Ben Macon, that he had lived in the park for ten years, and that he had spent several days during the previous summer with Coby, whom he described precisely, down to Coby's strik-



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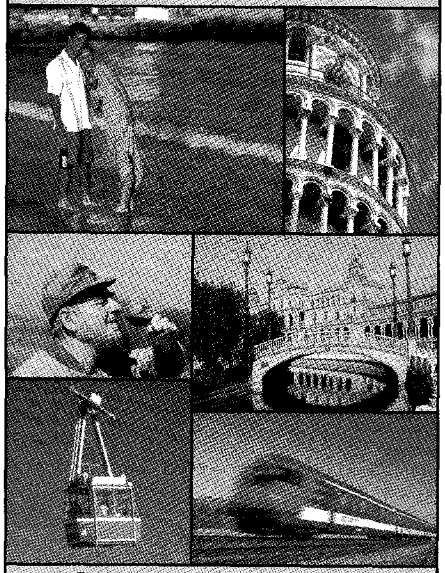

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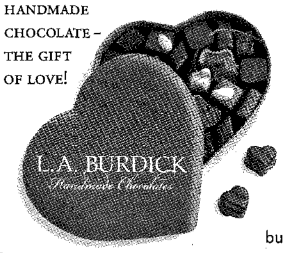

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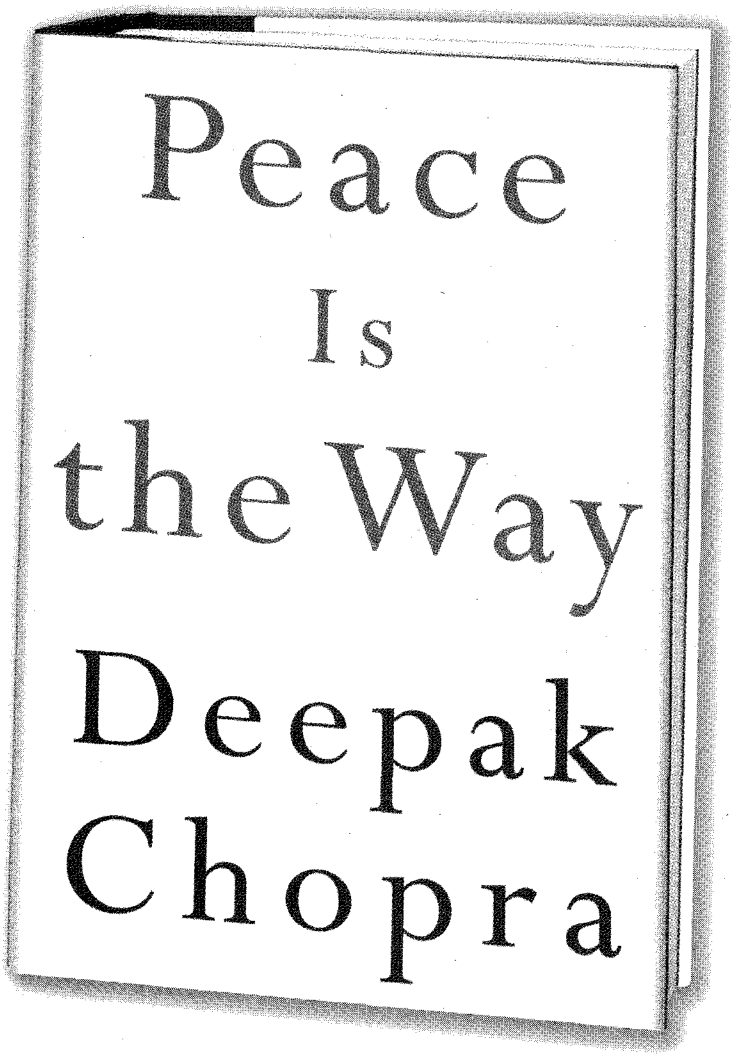

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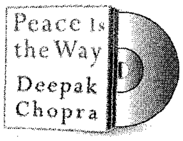

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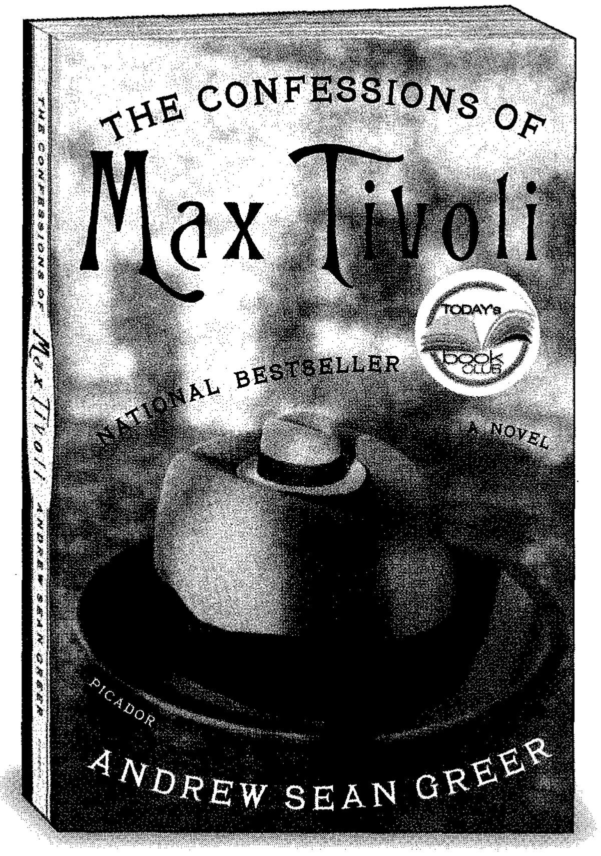
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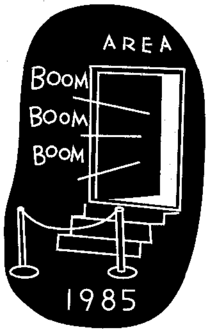
ing stare and predatory crouch while playing catch. "That dog was unbelievable," Macon said. "He was someone you could play with. He'd be your friend. You could tell he was a people dog." Macon strummed a little and then leaned on the guitar. "If I had a place of my own, I'd like a dog like that. But people with dogs, those are people who have good jobs." He paused for a moment and then added, "A dog like that gives you a warm feeling. I miss him."



By mid-afternoon that Sunday, Bell and Morris had spent hours searching in the park and going up and down Boulevard, so they took a break from handing out flyers and hanging posters and went home to shower and eat. Their phone rang. A woman on the line said that on Saturday she and her partner had picked up a black male Border collie with no collar as he chased a tennis ball across Boulevard. They had had no luck finding his owner through rescue groups, and they were currently in their car with the dog on their way to the veterinarian because they had decided to keep him. But en route to the vet they had seen one of Bell and Morris's posters—they had probably hung it no more than an hour before. The woman, Danielle Ross, suggested that Bell and Morris meet them at the vet's. When she got off the phone, Ross, who also works at the C.D.C. but had never met Bell, decided to say the name of the dog on the poster to the dog in her car. First she pronounced it "Cobbie," and the dog, who looked reasonably healthy but was totally exhausted, didn't lift his head. Then she tried another pronunciation—"Cobee"—and he sat up. By the time she and her partner, Debbie Doyle, and the dog arrived at the Pets Are People, Too clinic, she knew the dog was going home.

When Bell and Morris pulled into the parking lot, they could see the dog through the front window of the clinic, and they knew it was Coby. As exhausted as he was, he raced to meet them at the door. Late that night, a police officer called Bell and Morris at home. There had been an automobile accident; the driver had fled; the car, which had been impounded, belonged to them. When Bell and Morris went to the police station the next day to claim it, they were first told that they were mistaken—that no car matching their car's identification numbers had been impounded. But then the officer checked the records again and determined that they did in fact have the car. It had been totalled.

Now, with both Coby and the car accounted for, Bell and Morris felt they might be on a streak. All they needed was to find the viola da gamba. They decided to look in the phone book for pawn shops; there are nearly three hundred in the Atlanta area, so they concentrated on ones near the park where Coby had spent his time. One of them, Jerry's Pawn Shop, listed musical instruments among its specialties. It was a long shot—there are some ten thousand items pawned each month in downtown Atlanta alone, and it was just a guess that the car thief would have decided to cash in the instrument, that he would have chosen to do it at a pawn shop, and that he would have taken it to one near the park. Morris called Jerry's and asked after the viola da gamba. Yes, they had just got one from a fellow who had pawned it for twenty-five dollars. It was Morris's loaner. The man who pawned it? "Well, he didn't strike me as a viola da gamba player," Bill Hansel, who handled the transaction, recalled. According to Hansel, the man was youngish, in a hurry, and happy to sell the viola da gamba outright rather than pawn it. A Georgia law requires fingerprints and identification from anyone doing business with pawn shops. The police later traced the address that the non-viola da gamba player had provided; it turned out to be an empty house.

At this point, the police certainly knew the thief's name—it was on the pawn voucher and in the detention records from his previous lockup with Chris Walker, and there were fingerprints on the Volvo, the viola da gamba, the pawn voucher, and probably on Coby, but the man was still at large. Before the car was towed to a wrecking yard, Morris went through it one more time to see if there were any last belongings of his or Bell's still inside. There was nothing of theirs, but the thief had left behind some of his clothes, a bunch of computer parts, notes from his girlfriend, poetry he had written, and a stack of address labels bearing someone else's name. ♦

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How David Milch got from "NYPD Blue" to "Deadwood" by way of an Epistle of St. Paul.

BY MARK SINGER

The moving images on the camera monitor offered, I thought, a plausible depiction of one of the drawbacks of life in the Old West—an invasive urological procedure conducted without benefit of anesthesia. "A situation involving significant unpleasantness" was how David Milch, the creator of "Deadwood," had described the scene being filmed on a soundstage at Melody Ranch Studios, in Santa Clarita, thirty miles northwest of Los Angeles. One of Milch's inventions, Al Swearengen—or, rather, Milch's conception of the real Al Swearengen, owner of the Gem Saloon, a tavern and bordello in the town of Deadwood, just outside the Dakota Territory, circa 1877—was about to have a metal probe called a Van Buren's sound inserted into his urethra by Doc Cochran, a tormented physician on the verge of a breakdown. If the procedure succeeded, Swearengen would pass a bladder stone and, presumably, resume hatching schemes of byzantine deviousness—a poetically unjust outcome, considering the inventory of murders and casual brutality he was responsible for. If it failed, the next recourse would be surgery, which the doctor dreaded because of its high risk of mortality. That Swearengen, the chief protagonist of "Deadwood," an unlike-any-Western-you've-ever-seen Western that ran for twelve episodes last year on Home Box Office and returns next month with twelve more, might be allowed to die seemed improbable. Yet, ostensibly important characters were not immune from getting shot or having their throats slit or their brains dashed, so who knew? In any event, it turned out that I had only a dim grasp of what I was watching.

Twenty minutes earlier, Milch had instructed the actors Ian McShane (Swearengen), Brad Dourif (Doc Cochran), Paula Malcolmson (Trixie, a prostitute and Swearengen's occasional mistress), and W. Earl Brown and Sean Bridgers (Swearengen's henchmen Dan Dority and Johnny Burns) to approach the scene—five people struggling fiercely so that one of them might properly pee—as if the patient were a woman in labor. Between takes, Dourif wandered over and Milch asked, "How was that?"

"You know, that one seemed to sail pretty goddam good," Dourif said. "It's not just me. It had the whole baby thing in there. If we get the baby thing, we all can make it work together."

"Go get 'em," Milch said.

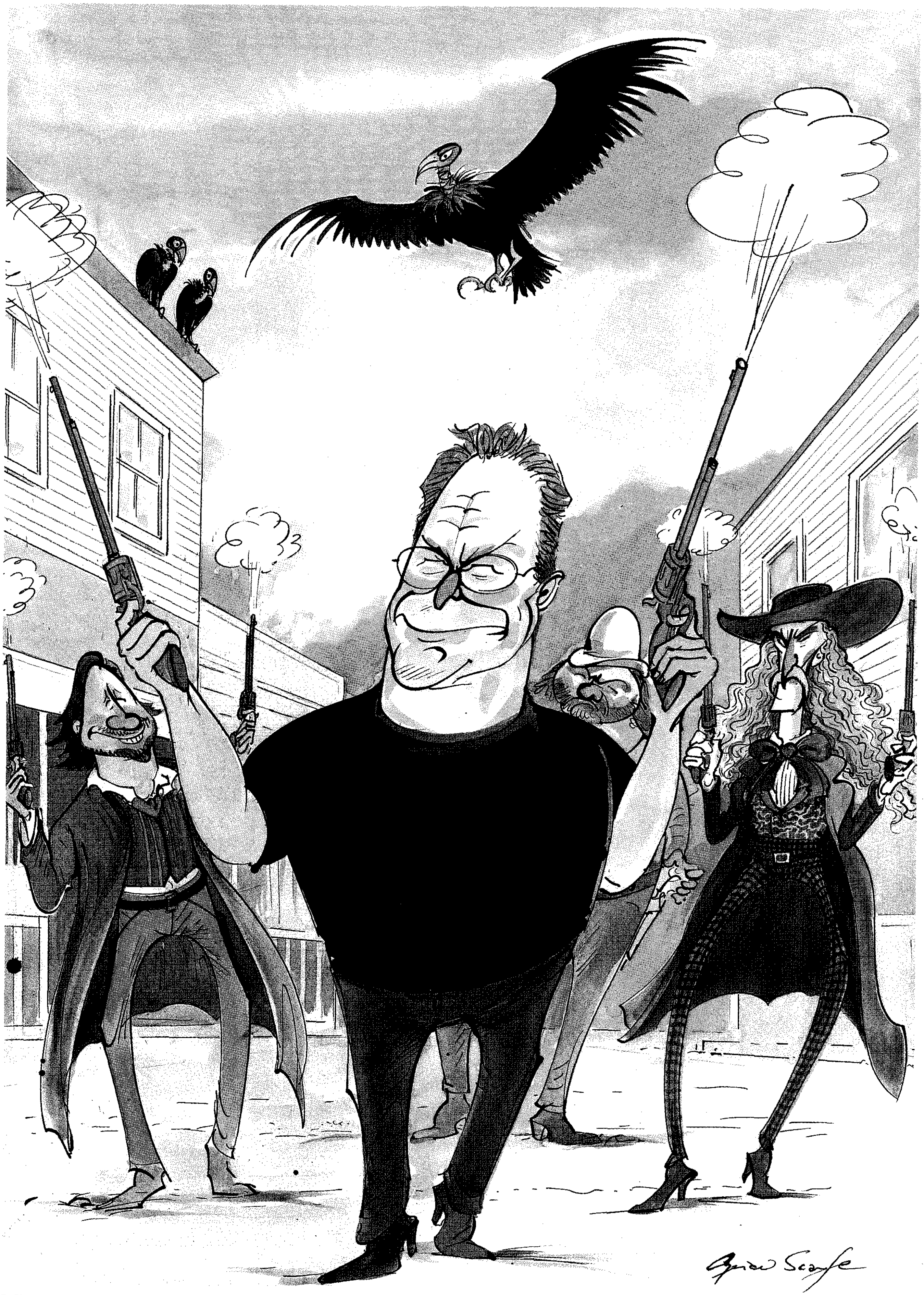
Then he turned to me and launched into a typical Milchian riff, a garrulous but lucid stream of subtextual information—intellectually daunting, digressive, arcane, wittily profane—a phenomenon familiar to everyone associated with "Deadwood."

"It isn't just about witnessing a woman suffering," he said. "It's about the cohabitation of the spirit—where you've gone out as fully in compassion as one human being can to another. And all you're trying to do is help her through. In any operation, what you have to do is to persuade the patient to grant access to the patient's energy. The purest form of that is when you're trying to help a woman through labor, when you're saying 'Push, push!' and you're rhythmically with the woman. What you see at the beginning of this scene is the doctor—as modern medicine—collapsed into himself. Simply looking at the instruments of his own failure. Left alone, medicine kills. The predicate of modern medicine is 'We invalidate your humanity but we give you immortality, so you have to shut up and listen to us.' That's the bullshit that gets sold to patients, and Cochran knows it. He's already been broken on that wheel. He was a Civil War surgeon and all his patients died."

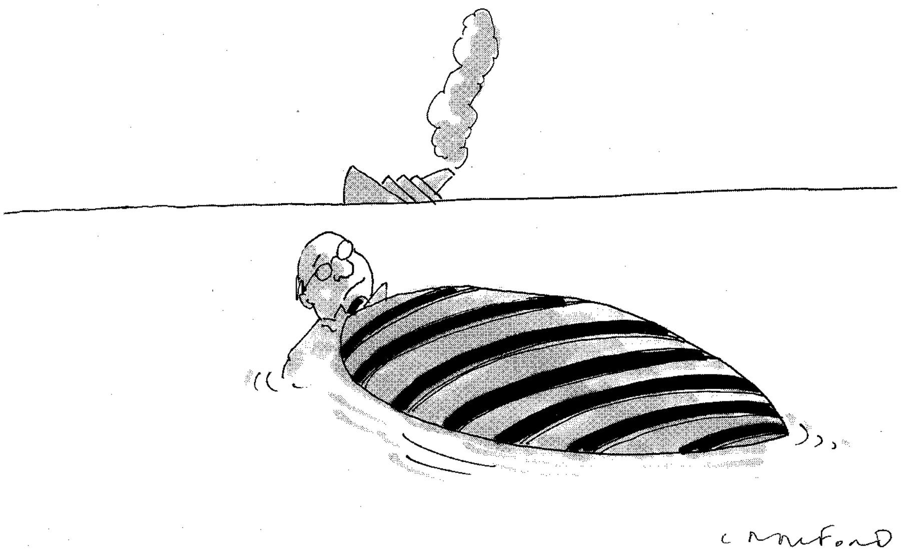
When Milch speaks, it's with a natural storyteller's alert, legato fluidity. His hands stay busy and he projects a cerebral intensity. He has brown eyes, a wide mouth, a strong nose, dark hair that he refuses to let go gray—he turns sixty this year—and the pale fleshiness of someone who doesn't expose himself much to sunlight. "There's a story by Hawthorne, 'Ethan Brand,' about a man who goes out looking for the unpardonable sin," he continued. "He discovers that it's the violation of the sanctity of another person's heart. To use an instrument to open up another person without a loving, terrified humility is the unpardonable sin. That's what medicine does, and Cochran has done it too much. At the beginning, he falls back on his fear. But then, in apprehending for just a moment the suffering of the others in the room with Swearengen, he's able to go past it and he finds that the minute one person is brave the spirit comes alive. What I'm trying to suggest to the actors is that the modern situation is predicated upon the illusion of the self's isolation—that business of 'I'm alone, you're alone, we can bullshit each other when we're fucking or whatever else, but the truth is we're alone. Right?' Well, I believe that *that* is fundamentally an illusion."

The central premise of "Deadwood" is that a populace of exiles—wily misfits, dim-witted misfits, bloody-minded opportunists, gamblers with nothing to lose, abused abusers—have gathered in a gold-mining settlement where trustworthiness and love are the rarest of commodities. Inexorably, they must curb some of their tendencies toward anarchy and savagery and embrace certain rudiments of civilized society; otherwise they will destroy themselves (or, almost as dire a prospect, be subjugated by the federal government). The emblematic speech of the series occurs in the fifth episode of the first season. It's a funeral oration for Wild Bill Hickok, who was murdered during a poker game in Deadwood in 1876. The speaker, a radiant but seemingly demented preacher who is himself doomed by a brain tumor, elaborates on St. Paul's

GERALD SCARFE


Gerald Scarfe

Milch intended to be a novelist—Robert Penn Warren compared him favorably with Hemingway—but he got derailed.



LAUGH AS SOME MIGHT, CARL'S INFLATABLE TIE KEPT HIM AFLOAT UNTIL HELP ARRIVED.

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first Epistle to the Corinthians: "St. Paul tells us from one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member but many. He tells us: 'The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee.' Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble . . . and those members of the body which we think of as less honorable—all are necessary. He says that there should be no schism in the body but that the members should have the same care one to another. And whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it."

Which is Milch's way of saying that, though a lawless existence at the edge of the frontier has its attractions, collective survival requires human beings to learn to function interdependently, and in that way communities become single organisms. The woman in labor must never be forsaken, the not quite diabolical pimp with the excruciating bladder stone must be comforted. It's no coincidence that Milch has spent much of his life exploring varieties of decadence and rapture, temptations of self-destruction and not quite unpardonable sinning. That life has now led him to "Deadwood," very much a collective enterprise and a peculiarly compelling vehicle for exploring the artistic possibilities of redemption and the redemptive possibilities of art.

"When did you write this scene?" I asked Milch.

"Yesterday or the day before," he said.

"When did you conceive it?"

"When I wrote it. I try consciously to frustrate the impulse to think about a scene before I sit down to it, because—you know the highfalutin' expression 'You can't think your way to write action; you can only act your way to write thinking.' "

Forty years ago, as a Yale undergraduate, Milch intended to become a novelist. His condensed explanation of how he strayed from that path—despite the encouragement of his teacher and avatar Robert Penn Warren, who favorably compared his dialogue-writing skills with Hemingway's—is that he got derailed by "compulsive, ritualistic behaviors," a category that covers substance abuse along with more idiosyncratic habits. Had there been a therapeutic program for individuals who spend every single day for more than a year retyping the same twelve pages, Milch would have qualified. Eventually, he did produce a novel, which he decided not to publish. During the eighties and nineties, he had enormous success, critical and otherwise, writing for television ("Hill Street Blues," "NYPD Blue"), and "Deadwood" demonstrates that his narrative gifts have deepened. Along the way, he adopted an eccentric method of composition—writing for a live audience, as it were—to circumvent what he calls "the processes of my consciousness which are not well adapted to constructive behavior."

Milch relies on a computer but never touches the mouse or the keyboard himself, because, he's learned, such mechanical tasks offer too many opportunities for obsessive-compulsive distraction. During production, each morning a driver would deliver him from his home in Santa Monica to Melody Ranch Studios, where a half-dozen or so people would be waiting to join him in the living room of a trailer. While the others sat on a sofa or chairs, Milch reclined on the floor in the center of the room, a few feet from a microphone and a twenty-inch computer monitor, on the other side of which was a desk where an amanuensis, seated in front of a computer and another monitor, was poised to type whatever he dictated. Liz Sarnoff and Jody Welch, two staff writers, were always present, along with three or four young aspiring writers, interns whom Milch paid out of his own pocket to learn by silently observing. (Another writer, a Milch contemporary named Ted Mann, chose to stay away. "Thirteen people sitting in a windowless room watching one person talk to a screen—no, thanks," Mann told me. "I don't think I would've wanted to watch William Faulkner write, either.")

Whether starting a new scene or revising someone else's draft, Milch would usually begin with a discursive monologue about context and subtext. The pilot script, which he wrote in 2003, grew out of two years' research into the history of the West in general and Deadwood specifically, gold mining, Indian wars, whorehouse and casino protocols, public-health records, politics in the Black Hills, criminality and extralegal justice, the Gilded Age, the bank panic of 1873, and biographies of historical figures. Last spring and summer, as the first season's episodes were being aired, Milch convened the writers and interns for several weeks to explore how characters, themes, and story lines might evolve, and the transcriptions of those sessions totalled hundreds of single-spaced pages. "We want to integrate the individual story lines into the over-all emotional atmosphere," he said at one point. "The first season is about the individuals improvising their way to some sort of primitive structure. . . . There's a provisional sense of promise." In the second season, he suggested, "what ought to haunt the atmosphere is that the gold may have dried up. . . . What you want every character to be looking at is 'What's the worst-case scenario? What's the disaster scenario? They sink the shafts and there's nothing there.' " Milch has a prodigious memory, which means that these densely layered observations are at the disposal of his consciousness, as well as his unconscious, when he finally sits down, or lies down, to write. After witnessing this process on several occasions—the ambience in the room seems equal parts master class and séance—the comparison that strikes me as most apt is channelling. The only sounds are the hum of an air-conditioner and Milch's voice, or, more precisely, the voices of his characters speaking through him.

The day after the bladder-stone scene was shot, the task at hand in the trailer was an encounter between Dan Dority, an erstwhile highwayman whose grander criminal ambitions have led to an apprenticeship with Swearengen, and E. B. Farnum, the mayor of Deadwood and the proprietor of the Grand Central Hotel. Farnum, an oleaginous toady played with comic finesse by William Sanderson, lives suspended between mortal fear of Swearengen and mercenary eagerness to do his bidding. Standing at the bar of the Gem, he reports that his sleep the previous night was disrupted by pain-filled screams. Dority, determined to conceal that Swearengen is seriously ill, refuses the bait.

Wearing a pair of dark-brown corduroys, a black T-shirt, and dusty black ankle-high boots, Milch was sprawled on his right side. Loose pages lay in front of him, but he didn't refer to them as he spoke: "I wonder in short how the fuck Al is." Pause. "I wonder, comma, in short, comma, how Al is fucking feeling being it was his yap the screams was coming from." Pause. "I wonder, in short, being it was his yap the screams was coming from, how Al is fucking feeling. . . . I'm wondering, in short, being his yap issued the screams, how Al is fucking feeling." He shifted his posture occasionally—propped himself on his elbow, then sat up, leaned forward, massaged his shoulders—but never took his eyes off the monitor. Slowly, rhythmically, he tilted his head from side to side, moved his lips and jaw as if rattling the words inside his mouth, gestured as if one hand were talking to the other. A half hour later, he had it down, an entirely credible dialogue that would flow smoothly into but not foreshadow a spasmodically violent encounter between Dority and a minor character.

FARNUM: I heard screaming. From Al's room.

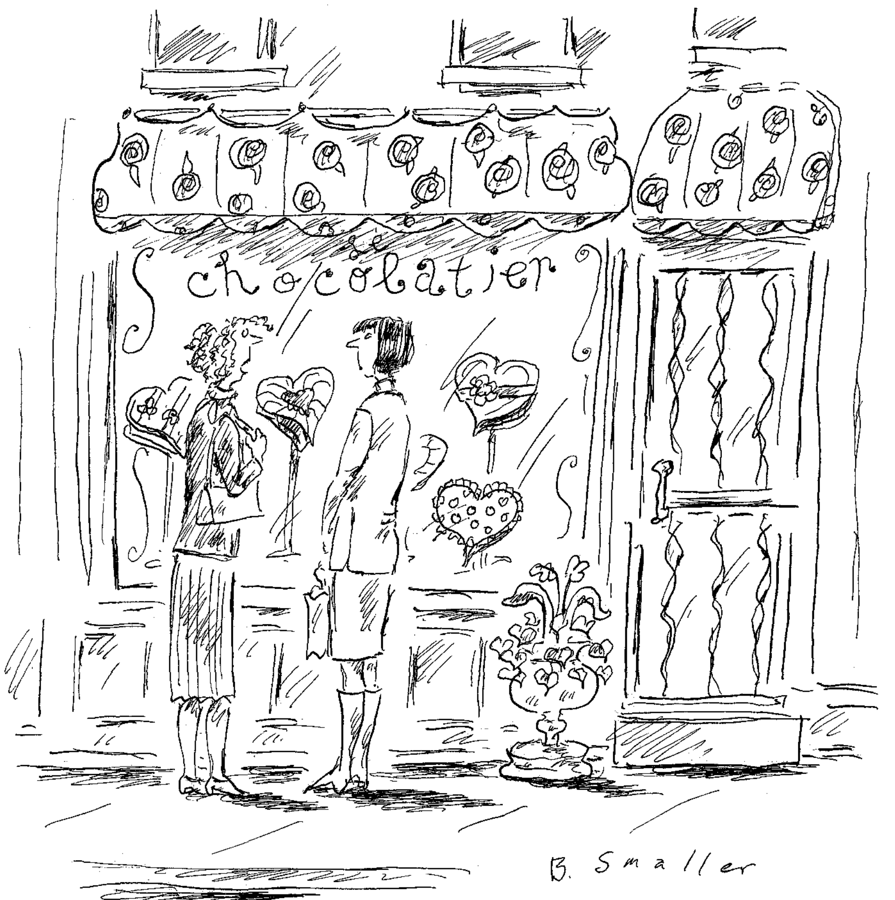
DORITY: Happens up there many a fucking evening.

FARNUM: Al was fucking screaming, Dan. And I'm wondering how he's feeling this morning. And you dancing around the pole ain't allaying my fucking anxieties.

To gain access to the characters, Milch says, his strategy is to make himself disappear. Citing William James in "The Varieties of Religious Experience," he asserts that "all apprehensions of the deity have in common ego suppression at depth."

"James said that every vision that ever came to anyone is prefaced by a sense of dissolution of the self," he said. "It's the fragmentation of ego that allowed what he called the oceanic sense to flow in. I find that when I'm merely thinking about a scene I'm in an egoist state, which is the opposite of the state of being where you suppress the ego and go out in spirit to the characters. What writing should be is a going out in spirit. And my idea of storytelling is—I wouldn't say it's religious but I would say it's spiritual. You know, the chemist Friedrich August Kekule worked for twenty years trying to figure out the structure of the benzene ring, and he couldn't do it. And then one night he was sleeping and he had a vision of a snake swallowing its tail. So he told his students about it and they said, 'Not bad, you go to sleep and you wake up with that.' And he said, 'Visions come to prepared spirits.' The way Billy Wilder put it was 'The muse has to know where to find you.'

"But it's not as if I just go with the flow. I spent a lot of fucking time studying these characters and trying to feel my way into them. And I feel that once you've done that sort of research and lived into your sense of the characters, the next essential step of the process is to suppress



"I'm surprised I'm still single—I always thought I'd be divorced by now."

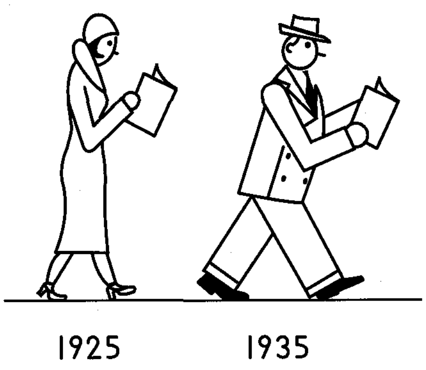
the self. The way that happens for me is that the only time I'll think about the work is when I'm working. I won't plan it out. My belief is: anything you're thinking about when you're not in the act of writing is probably useless."

When I was a senior at Yale, I used to meet occasionally with R. W. B. Lewis, the critic and biographer (Edith Wharton, the James family), who taught at the university for thirty-nine years and, along with Robert Penn Warren, was Milch's mentor and friend and, in some respects, peer. In the acknowledgments of "The Jameses," Lewis begins with a paragraph expressing "a very large and special debt of gratitude" to Milch. A few times, in 1971 or 1972, I encountered Milch as he worked in an office in Calhoun College, where Lewis was the master. He made a distinct impression: a cigarette-smoking wise guy with long wavy hair who, though only a few years older than I, was exponentially more worldly. Warren had arranged for Milch to begin teaching seminars in fiction and poetry at Yale that year and to work on a two-volume textbook anthology of American literature that he and Lewis were editing with Cleanth Brooks. It didn't take Milch long to acquire a cult following; his classroom style was vibrant, earthy, and often derisively funny, and details of his avocational exploits enhanced his mystique. For instance, he was a gambler who knew a great deal about horse racing and was writing a screenplay set at a racetrack. (Were his students also aware that he was an alcoholic and a heroin addict?)

Depending on how one interprets the data, Milch was either bedevilled by self-destructive urges or possessed of keen survival skills that sustained him in the face of unhealthy compulsions. A superior student—he graduated summa cum laude and won the prize given for the highest achievement in English—he was an unlikely member of the jock fraternity (Delta Kappa Epsilon; George W. Bush, president), which provided a venue for his main extracurricular activity: drinking. Jeffrey Lewis, a novelist, screenwriter, and television writer who worked with Milch for five years on "Hill Street Blues," and who was his Yale roommate for three years, told me that one of the first things he understood about him was that he harbored "complicated and huge feelings about his father." Elmer Milch was an esteemed gastrointestinal surgeon in Buffalo. And, evidently, he was multiply addicted—to alcohol, horses, and painkillers (a consequence of a near-fatal car accident two years before David was born). He was perhaps manic-depressive, without question obsessive-compulsive, and more than capable of psychologically abusing those closest to him. "True Blue," a book David co-wrote about the early years of "NYPD Blue," includes a description of an instance, when he was eight or nine, of his father striking him hard on the back of the neck—atypical, in that "my dad hit me three times in my life." What had provoked this? He still wasn't sure, other than that his father was "always driven by things it was hard to understand, and which seemed to force him to live in a very narrow and specific way, and you didn't want to mess him up." Nevertheless, twenty-five years after his death, he is regarded with great sympathy by his son.

Al Swearengen's principal foil in Deadwood is Seth Bullock (played by Timothy Olyphant), a reluctant sheriff who previously has had a respectable career as a lawman in Montana. In 2002, Milch came across, in a book called "Earlier Pioneer Days in the Black Hills," a one-page recollection of Bullock, who had gone on to become one of Deadwood's leading merchants. As rendered by Milch, he is both a man of principle and a morally flawed pragmatist. Only in superficial ways is he more "civilized" than Swearengen. Moments arise when he restrains himself from literally taking the law into his own hands; at others, he bloodily yields to the impulse.

"Mark Twain used to say that when he would formulate a character he would suddenly realize he was meeting them for the second time; he met them the first time on the river," Milch told me. "These were all characters who would have had to be what they were described as being. So Bullock, as an exemplar of the law, would have had to be a particular kind of person. Psychologists talk about the binding of one thing to another, taking a feeling that is absolutely unacceptable and suppressing it by binding it to another feeling which is completely acceptable. It's what drug addicts do when they take a drug and superimpose it on a feeling that they don't want to have. For Bullock, the law was a binding against his impulse to violence—in particular, I suspect, against his old man.



"Darwin wrote about accidents of evolution—he called them 'sports'—species which turned out to be superadaptive in whatever environment they discovered themselves in. In social terms, those are civilizers. Intuitively, I knew that there had to be a Bullock, and when I read about him it was like"—he snapped his fingers—" 'I met him on the river.' And those guys—those sports—are what made the country great. Bill Hickok was another guy like that, men who were absolute mysteries to themselves. And my dad was that way, too, a complete mystery to himself—someone who would engage in purifying acts of kindness but done in such a contorted fucking way, in no way that could ever be rationalized. There's no way my peculiar set of adaptive characteristics could have survived except in that crucible."

Milch's paternal grandmother was the oldest of nine children, among them several boys with criminal propensities. Early on, it was ordained that Elmer, the bright promise of the next generation, would go to college and become a professional rather than join his uncles in the family business—nominally furniture retailing but mainly bookmaking and bootlegging. Inevitably, occasions arose when his particular skills proved convenient. In the early fifties, when the Senate held hearings on organized crime, Milch says, his father performed timely hernia surgery on family friends seeking medical pretexts to avoid testifying. Twenty years later, hoping to help jump-start his writing career, one of Milch's great-uncles introduced him to the mobster Meyer Lansky, who was semi-retired near Miami and fantasizing about a sanitized biography. (Things didn't work out with Lansky—for starters, "Meyer wouldn't tell you the truth about what time it was.")

Every August—"the one month a year that my dad allowed himself to have some pleasure"—the tribe gathered in Saratoga. (For many years, Elmer owned horses that competed at other New York tracks.) A decidedly confusing set of messages emerged from these rituals. At the racetrack, David's father would give him money, which he would in turn entrust to a waiter who would place bets for him. Then, at night, "my dad would rebuke me for being a degenerate gambler; what he was doing was yelling at himself, obviously." In the off season—this is a memory from when he was seven or eight—Milch liked to spend time in the basement in Buffalo wearing one of his father's fedoras and smoking Hav-a-Tampa cigars while reading old issues of the *Daily Racing Form*. ("Other than that, I was completely normal.") For several summers, David and his brother Bob, who was two years older, had commuted to Saratoga on weekends from a nearby camp. He understood at the time that he "wasn't much of a candidate for sleepover camp," but not until years later was he able to face squarely the fact that he had been preyed upon by a camp counsellor who was a pedophile. What Milch has made of such fraught relationships, betrayals, and traumas is, in essence, his life's work as a writer.

"Have you ever just blurted out a plea and then wished you could take it back?"

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Steven Bochco, who in 1982 hired Milch to write for "Hill Street Blues" and in the early nineties collaborated with him in creating "NYPD Blue" (a reinvention of vérité storytelling and better than any police drama that has come along since), has said, "David had more miles on him the day I met him than I'll probably have the day I die. He'll wrestle his demons forever, but I've never known anyone else who has learned to put his demons at his service in quite the way he has. I think that's his real genius. And David is a genius in the literal definition of that word. He is truly unique, truly original. 'NYPD Blue' allowed him to exorcise some of his demons or, certainly, to turn a light on in the room where they reside. None of this was done from a distance. He took on addiction, alcoholism, racism—things that are just so fundamental to our nature and things that are dangerous in society he found a way to explore cold-bloodedly. In a medium that is utterly fearful, he has been a fiercely brave writer."

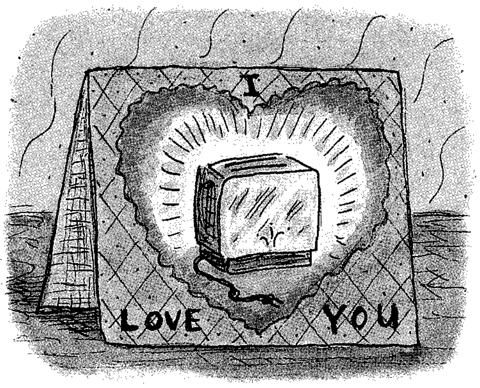
Mileage: At Yale, Robert Penn Warren taught an oversubscribed fiction-writing seminar. As a junior, Milch followed him around for days before slipping under his office door a chapter of his novel in progress, a narrative of four days in the life of a family in Buffalo whose teenage son has died in a car accident. The previous year, after his best friend was killed in a car accident, Milch had gone home for the funeral but should have stayed away; he spent the entire time uselessly drunk. The novel was, among other things, a gesture of expiation. Warren's seminar sessions consisted mainly of him reading aloud. Milch always sat in a corner, in thrall and saying almost nothing. Then, one evening, in what he remembers as "a pure act of stupidity, selfishness, and juvenile behavior," he brought a finished chapter to Warren at home, interrupting his dinner, and asked him to read it on the spot.

"He looked at me and said, 'Well, you act like a writer'—meaning, no manners," Milch recalled. "And he read it, and it was good and he was very good about it. Then I said, 'You know, I don't know if I want to write anymore.' To make him really come out and say—who knows, whatever—because he'd already told me, 'No one writes dialogue better than you.' Now, I've interrupted his dinner, he's been very gracious, and I say that, and he looks me in the eye and says, 'Understand, David. I don't give a shit who writes and who doesn't.' In other words: If you, David, are soliciting from me 'Oh, you must,' I ain't gonna say that, because that's up to you.

"Mr. Warren maintained certain disciplines that were in a way the best lessons he gave to me. As a model, he was crucially important. He and I stayed close pretty much all the way through. He sent me copies of the rough drafts of his poems, and we would sit down and he would tell me what he was trying to do. When he was dying, he asked me to come see him, which I did, and I find, as is the case with a really good teacher, even now I will suddenly understand something that he was trying to teach me back then about an approach to a poem."

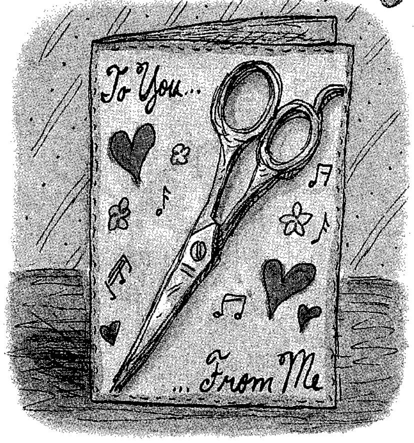
At least three mornings a week, Milch says, he rereads Warren's poetry. The ele-

Valentines for Things



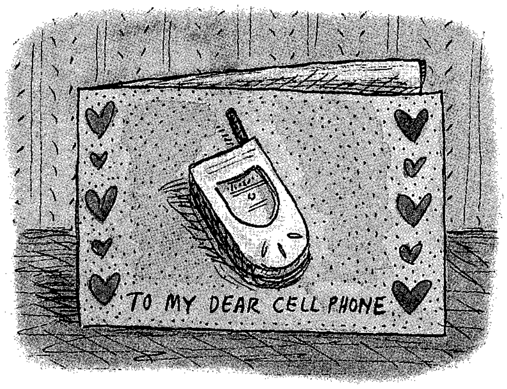
Other toasters broke my heart,
Burned the bread, then fell apart.
Only you make perfect toast,
And that's why I love you the most.

~ I'm so glad I found you.



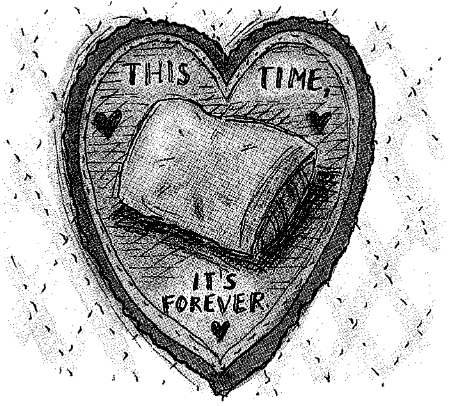
I've other pairs of scissors, but
They don't cut the way you cut.
Every clipping brings us nearer,
You're my favorite little shearer.

~ With love from your
special someone.


TO MY DEAR CELL PHONE

You let me call, you fold up small,
You never lie or cheat,
You're not a jerk, you always work,
You make my life complete.

~ Happy Valentine's Day,
sweetheart.



Some pillows feel like bags of rocks,
Some feel like they're stuffed with socks.
Or beans—or something very bumpy.
Some start out great but turn out lumpy.
My pillow history has its past,
But you're the pillow that's going to last.

~ Here's to us.

R. Chast

giac "I Am Dreaming of a White Christmas: The Natural History of a Vision," written when Warren was roughly the age Milch is now, concludes: "This / Is the process whereby pain of the past in its pastness / May be converted into the future tense / Of joy." As much as any of his hero's ideas—including the famous gentle exhortation of "Tell Me a Story" ("The name of the story will be Time / But you must not pronounce its name")—Milch has embraced this as a creative manifesto.

More mileage: After graduating from Yale, Milch briefly had a teaching fellowship, arranged by Warren, at the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. He stayed long enough to establish a reputation for brilliance (courtesy of Warren's imprimatur) and arrogance (resented for his bravado, self-satisfaction, and Ivy League pedigree by faculty members like Richard Yates and Kurt Vonnegut). A year later, needing a draft deferment, he enrolled at Yale Law School, where he lasted "about four hours"—one of the murkier elements of the Milch mythology. What happened? "Um, how does one put it? There were guns. There were police. There were street lights. I got arrested. I had become involved in quite a protracted pharmaceutical-research project involving hallucinogens. It all seemed to come together. So I was asked to withdraw." Next came "a period in Mexico that's a little dim," then a return to the University of Iowa to complete a master's degree in writing—though that was, he says, "a cover."

"I was in the employ of the same people I had been in the employ of in Mexico."

"You were selling dope?"

"Excuse me, I was not *selling* dope. I was manufacturing dope. Clear-light acid. But I did get an M.F.A."

From Iowa he went back to New Haven, where he began teaching and working with Warren, R. W. B. Lewis, and Cleanth Brooks on their anthology. Largely because he'd taken up heroin, he was drinking less. Milch's disarming approach to inquiring biographers runs along the lines of there's-nothing-you-can-find-out-about-me-that's-worse-than-what-I'll-tell-you-myself. Becoming a junkie, he told me, "saved my life," because it provided a kind of structure and focus. "I would have been dead because it was impossible to live the way I was and not get killed. Junk, although it had its own risks, still, relatively speaking, normalized my existence."

But only relatively. In 1982, the year he left Yale for good and began writing for "Hill Street Blues," he married Rita Stern, a documentary filmmaker and painter who had been an undergraduate while he was teaching. The oldest of their three children was born in 1984. Not long ago, when I was having a home-cooked dinner with the Milches, I asked whether, given the ridiculous hours television writers tend to work, the children had seen much of their father while growing up. Before he could reply, she did: "They saw him enough." No doubt. Bochco said that when Milch first moved to Los Angeles "he was a madman." He continued, "He had this little office and he managed to turn it into this place that looked like a bomb had gone off. I went in there one day and the drawer was open and there was a ton of cash inside. I said, 'How much is that?' He said, 'I won some money in Vegas.' It turns out he was commuting to work from Vegas. He'd catch a 6 A.M. flight to Burbank and at the end of the day he'd catch a flight back to Vegas and he'd be up all night gambling."

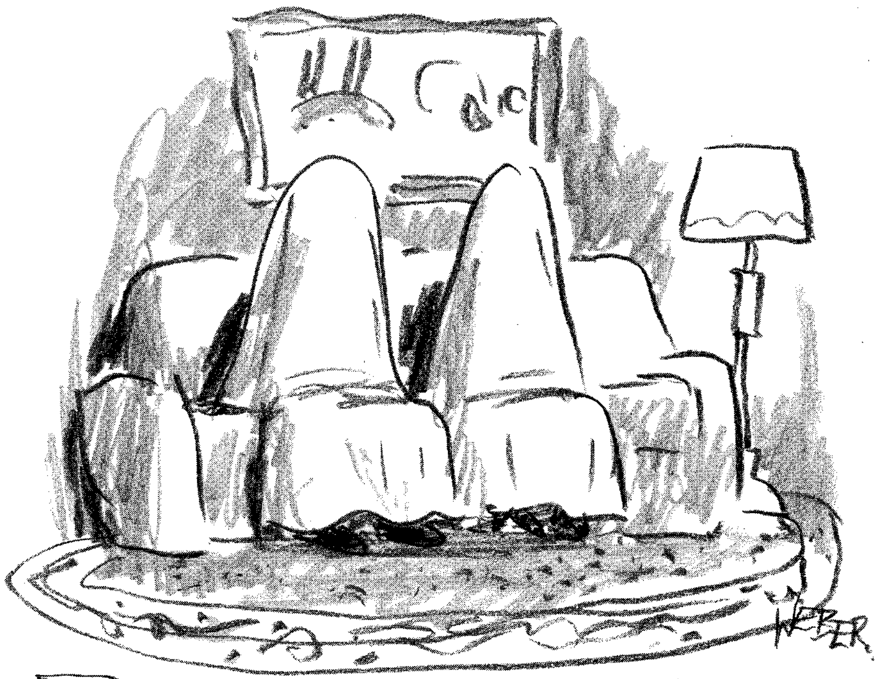
"Hill Street Blues," in its time considered a remarkably innovative ensemble production—acclaimed for its vivid camerawork, kinetic pacing, and engagement with the cynical complexities of urban cop life—went off the air in 1987. During the next two years, Milch created two other series: "Capital News," about a Washington *Post*-like daily, and "Beverly Hills Buntz," which starred Dennis Franz, who had portrayed an end-justifies-the-means detective on "Hill Street." Neither lasted long. Money would never again be a concern—Milch's final three-year contract with the producers of "Hill Street Blues" had paid him twelve million dollars; "NYPD Blue" to date has earned him more than sixty million, with plenty more to come from future syndication rights—but he had graver preoccupations. He checked himself in to a rehab clinic and then, for the better part of a year, "lay in this dark room and wept." His personal physician suggested that he not take antidepressants. ("He said, 'I don't want to jeopardize your gift.' ")

Gradually ("I don't know that anyone really feels normal for a year after you kick dope"), he regained his ability to function. He began taking medication for treatment of bipolar disorder. Rita Stern's capsule characterization of life with her husband is "The thing with David is he's like the girl with the curl: when he's good, he's very, very good, and when he's bad he's horrid. There's nobody I've ever met as smart and as funny and as generous. He's just the best." Easier to say, perhaps, from the perspective of the present.

Milch had always been able to write while using drugs, and within a couple of years he relapsed. When I asked him at what age he finally stopped using heroin, he replied, "The answer to a question like that depends upon who you're lying to." Throughout the nineties, he abused a smorgasbord of narcotics (mainly Vicodin), even though he had developed a serious heart condition. He started exercising obsessively and soon lost fifty pounds, but he also started drinking again. After its first season, "NYPD Blue" received twenty-six Emmy nominations. Milch won the Emmy for best writing in a drama two years in a row. One of the winning episodes, "Lost Israel," dealt with the murder of a young boy by his father, who was sexually abusing him. Milch's productivity never flagged, but by the show's seventh season he was exhausted. His closest colleagues felt that his work had begun to suffer, and he didn't disagree.

He had tried but not fully honored Warren's prescription—he had written honestly of depravity and moral failure but still hadn't succeeded in transmuting the "pain of the past in its pastness" to the "future tense of joy."

"You know, they say in recovery, 'Fake it till you make it. Act as if,' " Milch told me, speaking, as he occasionally does, not in the voice of a literature professor but as a humbled believer in twelve-step orthodoxy. "I think I was acting as if I had access for a long time without ever really having access. I was writing, but I can't tell you how many times I stood up to receive Emmys or whatever and I was absolutely loaded and worse than that. Coming home every night to a wife who I adored and children who I loved and actually feeling that there was a barrier that could never be penetrated because I was impersonating a human being. And for a long time I felt that was actually the best I



CHRISTO PAYS A VISIT TO CHESTER AND ELLIE SHUMWAY

• •

could ever hope for—to pretend to be a good person—because I was quite the opposite. I could see that there was a worth in the work. But, even in that work, what I felt was: I'm doing as well as I can, given the fact that fundamentally I'm no good. And that conviction of unworthiness was the deepest lesson I had been taught as a child, that I was the surrogate demon who was to act and sort of expurgate the demonic in my dad. That I was to be the bad egg. The consumption of the drug is the symptom of the disease. Then the symptom becomes autonomous. And the disease requires you to believe that you are beyond help and so it is your only friend. That predication is an exact recapitulation of the fundamental emotional malaise that you start out with. So as long as I was loaded, no matter how prolific or accomplished I was, I felt that it was an act of imposture."

On January 1, 1999, he says, he began to get clean again. And, he says, he has stayed clean since.

In the fall of 2001, three hundred people turned out on six consecutive Tuesdays at the headquarters of the Writers Guild, in Beverly Hills, where Milch had rented an auditorium to offer a free course in screenwriting. Each class session was, for the most part, a two-hour monologue—Milch being alternately funny and evangelical about writing, doing what he could to demystify the process. The homework assignments were bound by strict ground rules: write every day, for not less than twenty or more than fifty minutes, a scene with only two voices and no other narrative description; "Don't think about what it means, don't think about who they are"; and, above all, "Don't think about what you're going to write before you do it."

There was, for Milch, an intrinsic connection between the lecture series and the progress of his recovery. "The first time I shot up, the guy who was my dealer said, 'Heroin's gonna give you everything, but you're gonna have to give everything to heroin,' " he said. "That's true. The precondition of the addictive sensibility is you're alone; it's you and the dope. So it's a constricting perspective. And it's a great blessing to be released from that and, having been, it's also the case— You know, they tell you to carry the message. And the reason is not to get people into the tent; it's because the act of generosity is what keeps you fit against the distorted perspective of disease, which is isolation."

What seems odd, in retrospect, is the time lag between Milch's recovery and the recovery of one of his most compelling creations—and, it's often been assumed, though not necessarily correctly, his alter ego—Detective Andy Sipowicz (Dennis Franz), the central character of "NYPD Blue." When viewers meet Sipowicz in the first episode of the series, he's a self-subverting racist drunk who does everything but literally shoot himself in the foot. Instead, a mafioso with whom he's obsessed shoots him, giving him a near-death experience that leads to sobriety. Over the next several years, Sipowicz endures wrenching personal tribulations and occasionally falls off the wagon, but repeatedly rights himself and strives, despite his instinctive bigotries, to do good—because, of course, the invisible hand of Milch continues to rescue him from isolation. A lot of the cases Sipowicz works on are based on the experiences of a former New York City detective named Bill Clark. But, according to Milch, the real-life person whom Sipowicz most closely resembles is Elmer Milch.

"Insofar as there are similarities between my dad and Sipowicz, I'm grateful to have had the chance to portray Sipowicz's character; to show him in what another writer called his 'obstinate finality,' " Milch wrote in "True Blue." "That is, in full human complication: to do him justice."

In the first of his lectures at the Writers Guild, Milch said, "No one can teach you anything that you don't already know. And each of you has, in your heart, the capacity, when encouraged by a benign organizing presence, to identify the deepest truths of the human story."

After reading the transcripts of the lectures, I raised with Milch the notion that for him the imperative to teach—he met one-on-one with every student—was an inevitable corollary to his belief that the act of writing should be "a going out in spirit."

"Absolutely true," he agreed. "And the one thing I can guarantee is that the person who will really benefit from the teaching is unidentifiable. And it might not become apparent until five years from now, or whenever, because the seed has to germinate. A person could look at me through ninety-five per cent of my experience and know that I had no shot. Because I was so unreliable. The only thing you could rely on me for was to betray you. The old saying is I'd steal your dope and then help you look for it. So whenever anyone asks me for help, I always try to say yes, because you know how they say, 'Coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous.' "

A few months after the course ended, Milch went to a meeting at HBO to propose a series that was reducible to the pitch line "St. Paul gets collared." More expansively, he wanted to write about the lives of city cops in ancient Rome during Nero's reign, before a system of justice had been codified. "I was interested in how people improvised the structures of a society when there was no law to guide them," he said. "How the law developed out of the social impulse to minimize the collateral damage of the taking of revenge."

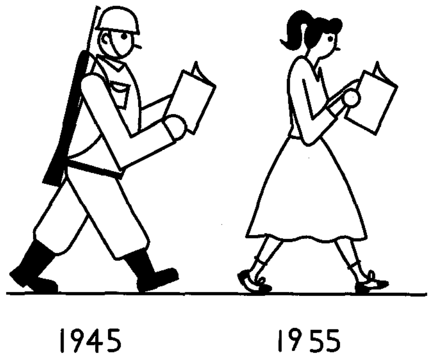
According to Carolyn Strauss, the president of the HBO entertainment division, she and her boss, Chris Albrecht, though enamored of the concept, "were, like, grimacing, because we both knew that we already had a Rome show in the pipeline." It focussed on a different emperor, "but, still, how many shows about ancient Rome can you have?" (The Rome series will air this fall.)

Albrecht asked, "Can you locate the same themes elsewhere?" Milch's response was that indeed he could—in a Western. The previous year, he'd pitched a Western, though not the same vision of a Western, to NBC, and the network had been willing to commit to making a pilot but not the thirteen episodes Milch wanted. So those discussions ended, providentially. "NBC would have fled in terror from 'Deadwood,' " Milch says.

Another year elapsed before Milch delivered the script for the "Deadwood" pilot to HBO. At the outset, he read about gold strikes, knowing that he wanted to establish a setting as close as possible to uninhabited wilderness. Deadwood was the site of the last big gold strike in the lower United States. When he began researching the town, which is now a tourist destination, he discovered that there was a museum in Deadwood where he could examine artifacts, historical documents, and photographs. And, at one point, a horse-trainer friend put him in touch with Gary Leffew, a world-champion bull rider who operates a rodeo school on the central coast of California. Ever since, Leffew and several other cowboys have been on Milch's personal payroll. Like the writing interns and various other souls (many of them in recovery) who find their way into his orbit—the less lofty in the social pecking order, it seems, the greater his affinity—all are beneficiaries of a largesse that one of his friends described to me as "the Milch scholarship program."

Leffew accompanied Milch on a brief trip to Deadwood, during which, he says, "I told David that what he needed to see was the spirit of the people who were here. They were a restless bunch, people with gold fever. The closest you could get, I thought, was the modern-day rodeo cowboy. I said, 'Let me bring in eight or ten of the wildest, craziest, most fun-lovin' bunch I ever knew in this game.' When you're riding bulls, you only work eight seconds a day. You have a lot of time on your hands. You're either fighting, fucking, or doing something that's kind of wild.

"He liked the idea. So I called these guys up and laid it out. Told 'em, 'David just wants you to come spend a few days with him. You can show him how to have a really good time and he'll pay for everything.' He wasn't drinking, but he was willing to observe. I was making reservations on Southwest Airlines, but, hell, he sent a Learjet to pick everybody up, except for a couple from Canada, who flew first class. Put 'em up in four-hundred-dollar-a-night rooms in Santa Monica. All the whiskey, all the fun, anything they wanted to do, just name it and we'd do it. None of them had ever had carte blanche like this before. I tried to bring in a diverse group—loud ones, mean ones, crazy ones, some that were off the page. Some that had a little larceny in their soul. Some with addictions. They played guitars, they told endless amounts of stories, of fights and fucking and riding and the mischief they'd get into from having time on their hands. Different whores they knew. We just needed to get David's juices flowing. Later, everybody showed up for the pilot and they played background. David put 'em up in furnished apartments near Universal Studios."



The first time I visited the "Deadwood" set, I was with Milch on a soundstage as, between takes, he struggled to open a small package of Advil for Ian McShane, who had a headache. "This is what's known as being a full-service fucking executive producer," he said as he tried to tear it with his teeth. A guy in a cowboy hat who was standing nearby, Monty (Hawkeye) Henson, a three-time world-champion saddle-bronc rider, pulled a knife from his pocket and offered it to Milch: "Here, why not try this equalizer?"

"No, thank you, Hawkeye," Milch said. "Believe me, in a life filled with mistakes, this is one I don't need."

Henson was one of a half-dozen cowboys who, in a manner of speaking, had come to dinner. The utilitarian value of their presence was no longer relevant, but no matter. Whatever "Deadwood" was about, the intricate self-propagating narrative that Milch continued to excavate each time he lay on the floor and looked into the computer monitor—all those strata of subtext and subplot—was so deeply rooted in his psyche that the cowboys had become, at most, mnemonic devices. They stuck around because Milch, who is forever appreciative of a good story or an apt simile ("tighter than a bull's ass in fly season"), enjoyed their company or was grateful to them for helping to confirm what he already knew and in fact had understood about human behavior long before he ever heard of Deadwood.

Atmospherically and literally, "NYPD Blue" looked and sounded different from anything that had previously appeared on network television. Milch succeeded in redefining what the ABC censors would tolerate; flashes of full frontal nudity and certain previously proscribed words ("son of a bitch," "asshole") were deemed permissible. A public airwave is a public airwave, however, and constraints remained; "motherfucker," for instance, still wasn't suitable for prime time. Post-"Deadwood," such fastidiousness feels quaint.

The language on "Deadwood" ranges

from Elizabethan-like ornateness to profanity of a relentlessness that makes "The Sopranos" seem demure. Both extremes often coexist in a single speech. Perhaps the most disturbing scene during the first season is a four-minute soliloquy by Swearengen at the conclusion of episode eleven. (The episode was written in collaboration with Ricky Jay, who played a croupier on the series.) He's in his bedroom, above the Gem Saloon, with a terrified young whore who's in Deadwood because he bought her from an orphanage in Chicago where the residents are often sold as prostitutes. Swearengen's mistress, Trixie, has taken up with another man. But in sentimentality, he makes plain, lies the risk of dishonor, which is its own sort of death.

"Now I see what the fuck's in front of me and I don't pretend it's somethin' else. I was fuckin' her and now I'm gonna fuck you if you don't piss me off or open your yap at the wrong fucking time. The only time you're supposed to open your yap is so I can put my fucking prick in it. Otherwise you shut the fuck up."

He's quite drunk, swigging whiskey straight from the bottle as he free-associates. Another sentimental threat looms: the preacher with the brain tumor requires a mercy killing and Swearengen will probably have to do the deed. He says, "He's gonna die sooner or later. I mean, he's making a fucking jerk of himself. I mean, why go on with that? Who's gonna benefit from that, huh? No, you gotta kill it and put an end to it. You don't linger on about it. You don't fucking go around weeping about it. And you don't behave like a kid with a sore fucking thumb. . . . You gotta behave like a grown fucking man. You gotta shut the fuck up, don't be sorry, don't look fucking back, because, believe me, no one gives a fuck."

But now he looks back himself, in agony. He holds up a warrant for his arrest, for a murder he committed in Chicago, and says to the whore, who might as well be a mechanical fellating device, "Can you believe that I may have stuck a knife in someone's guts twelve hours before you got on the wagon and we headed out for fucking Laramie? No! Because I don't look fucking backwards. I do what I have to do and go on."

The payoff: "Before she ran the girls' orphanage, that fat Mrs. Fucking Anderson ran the boys' orphanage on fucking Euclid Avenue. . . . My fucking mother dropped me the fuck off there with seven dollars and sixty some-odd fucking cents on her way to sucking cock in Georgia and I didn't get to count the fucking cents before the fucking door opened and there was Mrs. Fat Ass Fucking Anderson, who sold you to me. I had to give her seven dollars and sixty-odd fucking cents that my mother shoved in my fucking hand before she hammered one two three four times on the fucking door and scurried off down Euclid Avenue, probably thirty fucking years before you were fucking born."

Swearengen's pain—the shame, that his whore of a mother paid the mon-

PRAYING

(Attempt of April 19, 2004)

If I could shout but I must not shout.
The girl standing in my doorway yesterday weeping.
In her right hand an updated report on global warming.
An intelligent girl, with broad eyes and a strong
wide back. What am I supposed to tell her?
Outside the trees seem healthy to me, and the street is filled
with human busyness. Oh street. Built to conduct
all of our errands and appointments and even some secret running to
assignation. I feel now all the streets holding us up
as if they had a kind of patient willingness—no hopelessness—
just holding till it is time to be opened and undone.
The map of my city plays itself over my eyes, a piece
of vibrant lacework—of which I have seen the first
eleventh-century sample—which took the eyesight of the twelve-year-old
assigned it. Lace where the knots of the individual strands
are too small for the human eye as we know it to see.
Has the human eye changed. The eye doctor asks me
if it is more like dust or soil, the matter my eye splays
against the empty walls. More like dust. Then it's O.K.
It's really my own blood I see.
It will disintegrate, just not right away. When it goes
from dust to soil I should come back. Writing this
has been a very long detour I know.
No one likes to lie or be lied to.
Do I ask the help of the four walls and the hard soil-covering street
to answer the student still standing here?
The answers are unknown, but the possible truths
forbidden. Because we cannot ask another to live
without hope. Above—above all this—I have lived out my
life. Indulgent with hope. Given freedom to wonder.
To mull, speculate, praise.
Oh Lord what do I do with the great desire to praise.
The frenzied joy of detail. The fullness of
existence I feel in *contradiction*. I confess I love the
surface. The surface of all creation. Its absence of
feeling. Its presence of *sensation*. How do I stay awake
for this. The slumber is upon me. How I said to the girl
it would be all right *in the end*. Not to worry. There was
another suicide here last week. One must be so careful

re the disappearance of hope. A new illusion must present
itself immediately. When I pray now
this is what I pray for. That the girl not stand like this
in the doorway, with her facts on the sheet in her right hand,
hardly able to find a normal breath. The verdict
is irreversible. Meaning the word cannot be taken back.
It is said. It is said. That is what the boy who jumped
left in his note.
Knocking against a stone wall says the poet
knowing the wall will not yield to any im-
ploration. But the poet lived when there was a wall
(take away wall). The poet lived when imploration
rose up in the human throat. When hands rose to
knock. The girl in my doorway, more terrified
by the lack of terror in the *others*—"where are all the
others," she is crying, "why does no one know, why
is this *not being reported*" —how is she supposed to bear
the silence. Someone must implore.
Someone must expect yield.
She wants the desire to cry out.
She does not want us to
go down singing. I might. She doesn't. She can be
soothed today, friend, but not tomorrow. Tomorrow she
will jump out a window or pick up a gun or believe
with a belief that hums so loudly no human reason
will ever reach into that hive again, that whatever
happens
will be ordained. All will be a sign.
You will never again be able to scare her.
A story so firm it will abolish the future.
Coming in to grip the thing we call Time.
Don't tell her she's wrong when she comes to your
doorsill.
Let her weep. Do not comfort. Do not give false
hope.
Tell her to tell the others. Let the dream of contagion
set loose its virus. Don't let her turn away.
I, here, today, am letting her cry out the figures, the scenarios,
am letting her wave her downloaded pages
into this normal office air between us. 19 April. 2004.
I do not know what to tell her, Lord. I do not
want her
to serve you. Not you. Not you above all.

—*Jorie Graham*

strous Mrs. Anderson to take him off her hands—is something that his profanity, its awfulness notwithstanding, can barely convey. Carolyn Strauss, of HBO, told me, "Early on, the issue of language came up a lot. We asked David, 'Are you obscuring your message or the over-all acceptability of the piece in a way that may be not necessary?' He felt strongly that it was necessary. He'd done a lot of research." At Strauss's urging, Milch wrote an essay on the subject—five single-spaced pages, followed by four pages of bibliography—defending realism and freedom of expression as indispensable correctives to the varnished mythologies of the West perpetrated by Hollywood. After quoting from oral histories as well as authorities like H. L. Mencken, Daniel Boorstin, and William Dean Howells, he concluded, with an echt-Milch flourish, "If, as seems demonstrable, words like *prick*, *cunt*, *shit*, *fuck* and *cocksucker* would have been in common usage in the time and place in which 'Deadwood' is set, then, like any words, in form and frequency their expression will be governed by the personality of a given character, imagined by the author with whatever imperfection, as the character is shaped and tested in the crucible of experience. The goal is not to offend but to realize the character's full humanness."

One day in the writing trailer, I observed Milch as, in a jauntier-than-usual mood, he wrote a scene between a character named Wu and Dan Dority, Swearengen's protégé. Wu operates an abattoir and is the spokesman—though he proudly refuses to learn English—of the Chinese residents of Deadwood, who inhabit a muddy side street called Chink Alley. He and Swearengen have a mutually beneficial working relationship and apparently share a jaundiced view of the human condition; the hogs in Wu's pen get a bonus feeding whenever Swearengen needs to dispose of a fresh corpse. (In 1876, Deadwood averaged a murder a day.) Wu also deals opium to Swearengen, who uses it to keep his whores pacified. In the scene that Milch was creating, Wu has come to the Gem in agitation, having just spied a member of a rival San Francisco tong, freshly arrived on a stagecoach and already in conversation with one of Swearengen's business competitors. Because Swearengen is still indisposed by illness, Dority tries to handle the conversation. But Wu's side of the dialogue is limited to gesticulations and the elliptical exclamations "Swearengen!," "Cocksucker!," and "San Francisco!" He says "cocksucker" about ten times, with increasing vehemence, until Dority, whose English isn't all that grammatical, either, gets the drift. Later, Milch told me what he was thinking as he wrote it.

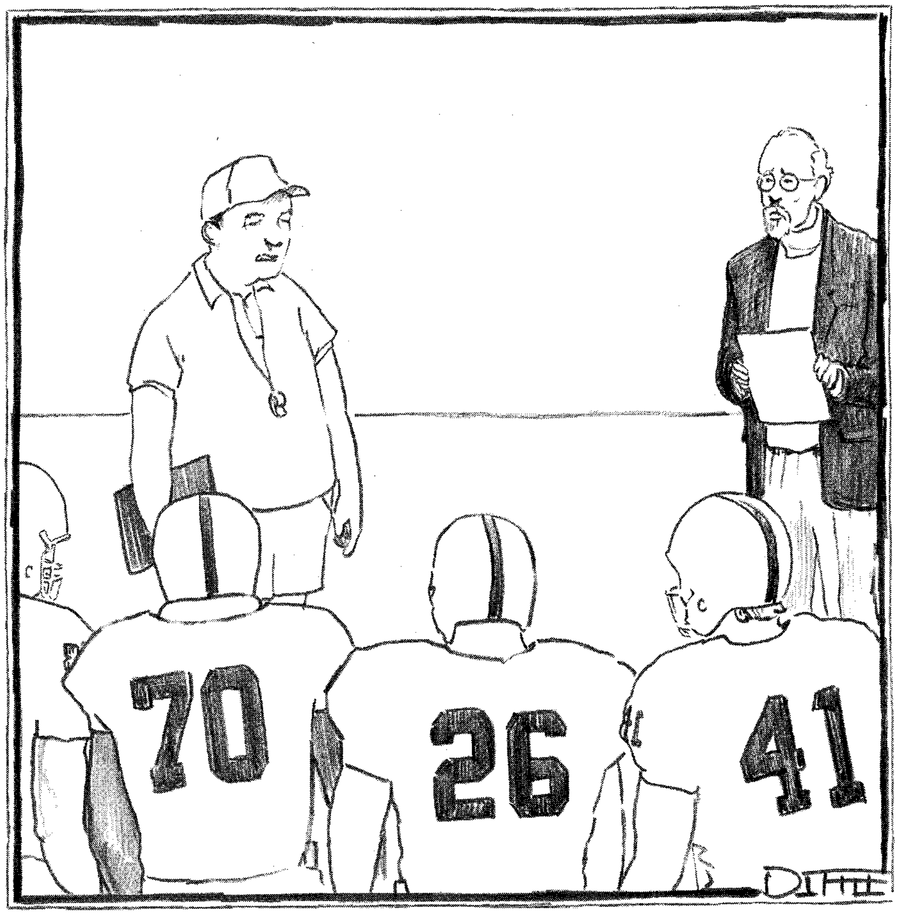
"I believe, at a very fundamental level, that words are electrical," he said. "The generation of words is an expression of electrical energy. The reason storytelling engages us perhaps more fully than other kinds of communication is because the words in a story can mean in different ways. They contain their opposites. In that scene—'Swearengen!' 'Cocksucker!'—we understand how provisional the meaning of a word is and that its fundamental meaning is contingent upon the energy with which it's endowed by the speaker. Energy is a gossamer and intangible and variable commodity, and words in a story are more clearly contingent and variable than words in a proof. The highest form of storytelling, it seems to me, is mathematics—where literally the signs contain within themselves the most violent and basic form of energy. Einstein understood that if he was able to sign correctly he would experience the secret of energy. He was telling himself a story with those signs, and he said, 'All I want to understand is the mind of God.' Now, I don't want to understand it; I want to testify to it. I believe that we are all literally part of the mind of God and that our sense of ourselves as separate is an illusion. And therefore when we communicate with each other as a function of an exchange of energy we understand not because of the inherent content of the words but because of how that energy flows. So Dority says, 'I can't understand you, Wu. Fucking language. I just can't do it.' And what he's saying is 'I'm trying. I'm trying.' And then they work something out."

That same day, in a different trailer, I sat with Milch as he and an editor, Steven Mark, watched a cut of the first episode of the second season. It occurred to me that the dialogue was so airtight—actors reading Milch's lines almost never ad-lib or improvise—that there was less filmmaking going on in the editing room than there had been in the writing room. Milch did have an afterthought, though, as he reviewed a scene in which Swearengen, whose ribs were aching after a fight with Bullock, said, "Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!"

"Lose that 'fuck fuck fuck,' " he told Mark. "Just have him say 'Fuck!' "

The first television script Milch ever wrote was an episode of "Hill Street Blues" titled "Trial by Fury"—in Steven Bochco's estimation, "arguably the best episode we ever made." (Milch had been recruited by Jeff Lewis, his former Yale roommate.) "Trial by Fury," an anatomy of the aftermath of two murders—that of a nun, for which all the investigative resources of the police department were mobilized, and that of a poor Hispanic man, which the cops virtually ignored—won an Emmy and a Writers Guild award and a Humanitas Prize, which was given by the Catholic Church and came with a check for fifteen thousand dollars. Milch used the money to buy an interest in a racehorse. "Over the next ten years," he wrote in "True Blue," "I bought and campaigned more horses, a few of which won big races, although on balance they'd cost me a lot more than I made." This has the ring of an honest understatement. Bill Clark, the former detective, who in 1992 was hired as a technical adviser for "NYPD Blue" and later became the executive producer, as well as one of Milch's closest friends, told me, "I hope you never have the experience of going to the track with David. He goes to the window and he starts betting compulsively." (Not that he limited himself to horses. Once, when Clark was in New York, Milch called from Los Angeles and asked him to collect a quarter of a million dollars in cash that he'd won the previous weekend betting on football games. Clark was also aware of at least one occasion when he'd bet more than five times that amount on a single Sunday.) In the mid-eighties, at Saratoga, he reactivated his father's racing colors. Milch's horses have run all over the world, often with thrilling success—in 1992 and 2001, he won Breeders' Cup races—and when he shows up in person the track officials usually designate a betting window for his exclusive use.

One day, after Milch and I had eaten lunch and were heading toward his trailer to continue our conversation, he said, "I haven't made a bet in months, but my trainer"—Darrell Vienna, the same person who'd introduced him to Gary Leffew, his cowboy connection—"called me this morning and said he's got a horse that he's quite optimistic about that's running today. Because of the transference to these trainers as these benign surrogates, I've been obsessed ever since the phone call. I've got to go bet that horse. It registers as a sort of disloyalty not to honor the trainer's taking the time to tell me. I'm sure at some level it feels like in-



"O'Brien, here, has written us a new play."

gratitude to my old man or something."

MOON, SHMOON.
BURNOUT

In the trailer, he picked up the phone and called a bookie: "Has Darrell got a horse going in the sixth? . . . Yeah. What are the odds? . . . How many are in there? So there's eleven? Do me a favor and bet twenty-five hundred across. Thanks a lot."

An assistant knocked on the door and announced that Milch was needed on the set to rehearse a scene. A half hour later, we were back in the trailer, where Milch talked about the importance of his relationship to Robert Penn Warren, the explaining of which required a brief detour through the writings of the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, then moved on to a George Santayana essay, "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," which argued that in mid-nineteenth-century America "a secret contempt for the life of the mind" had developed and that credit for "rescuing American cultural thought and behavior from gentility" belonged to William and Henry James. "In trying to understand how that would have taken place, I began to read about the Jameses," he said. "William James was a big hero of Mr. Warren's." In the way that they pursued knowledge and lived their lives, the Jameses had rejected the genteel tradition—"a sterile reverence for the past as past rather than a substantive connection to what's going on."

He continued, "Henry required of himself a consistent, fully committed existence, as William James did. William not only became an extraordinary teacher but his writing was beautiful. And he revised the idea of psychology, of philosophy. His essays on politics are wonderful. And on the physiology of thought—he articulated the idea that it's the way you learn to play the cards you've been dealt, rather than the hand itself, that determines the worth of your participation in the game. And the fact that the playing of the cards itself defines the quality of the game was, for me, a liberation. Mr. Warren spread out pretty much all the literary artifacts of American culture for me to study, as part of my working for him on that history of American literature. And in that I found the refraction, the perspective that I needed, to give me access to play the cards that I'd been dealt."

It was time to listen to the call of the sixth race at Santa Anita. Milch dialled a number, and then we both listened as the horse he had bet on—twenty-five hundred dollars to win, twenty-five hundred to place, twenty-five hundred to show—started near the back of the pack, then took off and won by three lengths. After he hung up the phone, I asked, "When you win, is the satisfaction in winning money or just in winning?"

"There's no satisfaction," he said. "Just a release of anxiety. There is no joy in the compulsive act. It's a sterile recapitulation, a sterile release of tension."

I wondered whether, given that drugs and alcohol were still a part of his life during the years he was writing "NYPD Blue," the creating of "Deadwood" had somehow been a more redemptive experience.

"I don't think that the fact that I've gone on to do 'Deadwood' makes the work on 'NYPD Blue' less redemptive," he said. "I think that had I not done the work on 'NYPD Blue' I wouldn't have lived to do this. Because William James says there are two kinds of spiritual experiences—sudden and gradual. An unfolding. To the extent that I've been granted a spiritual experience, it's been a gradual unfolding. I see all sorts of continuities from Sipowicz to Swearengen. The difference between them is more environmental than it is essential. Each of them is a character who does more good than he can acknowledge or accept. Each has more generosity than he can articulate. To the extent that that spiritual experience has deepened, I've been able to dramatize it more directly. That was why I wanted to get to a more primitive environment, where the dramatic expressions of what might be described as spiritual experiences are not so refracted by the social construct."

Who, I asked, was his favorite character in literature? The answer was Falstaff.

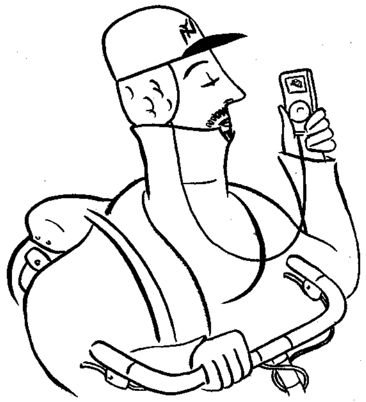
"Falstaff illustrated the purest form of the idea of expression as joy," he said. "Take Mr. Warren's formulation that 'this is the way that the pain of the past in its pastness is converted to the future tense of joy.' Falstaff was a character who had done everything. And whose capacity for language, the exuberance of whose expression was such that every experience, in the method of its expression, ultimately had a joyful effect. For me that was and continues to be— You know, people say that my writing is dark. And for me it's quite the opposite. It sees light in darkness and it doesn't try to distort darkness. The essential thing is that the seeing itself is joyful." ♦

PORTFOLIO

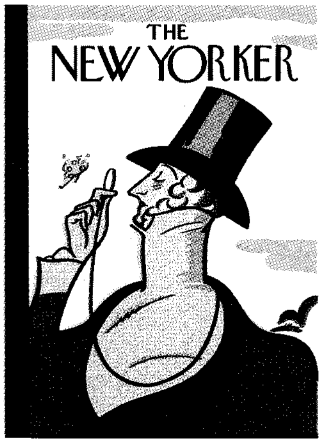
MYSTERY MAN

The many faces of Eustace Tilley.

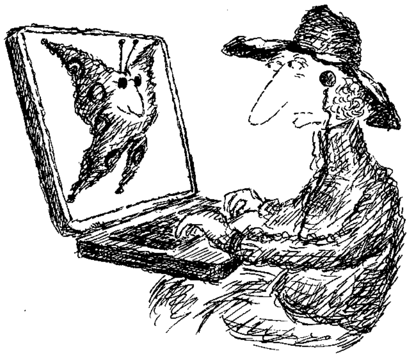
It's hard to know what people who picked up the first issue of *The New Yorker*, eighty years ago this month, made of the drawing on the cover. The picture is a joke, of course: which is more ephemeral, the dandy or the butterfly? But the picture also seems to be saying something about the magazine itself, and the question is: What? Is the man with the monocle being offered as an image of the *New Yorker* reader, a cultivated observer of life's small beauties, or is he being ridiculed as a foppish anachronism? Is it a picture of bemused sophistication or of starchy superciliousness? Did readers identify with the cover, or did they laugh at it?



Marc Rosenthal



Rea Irvin, 1925



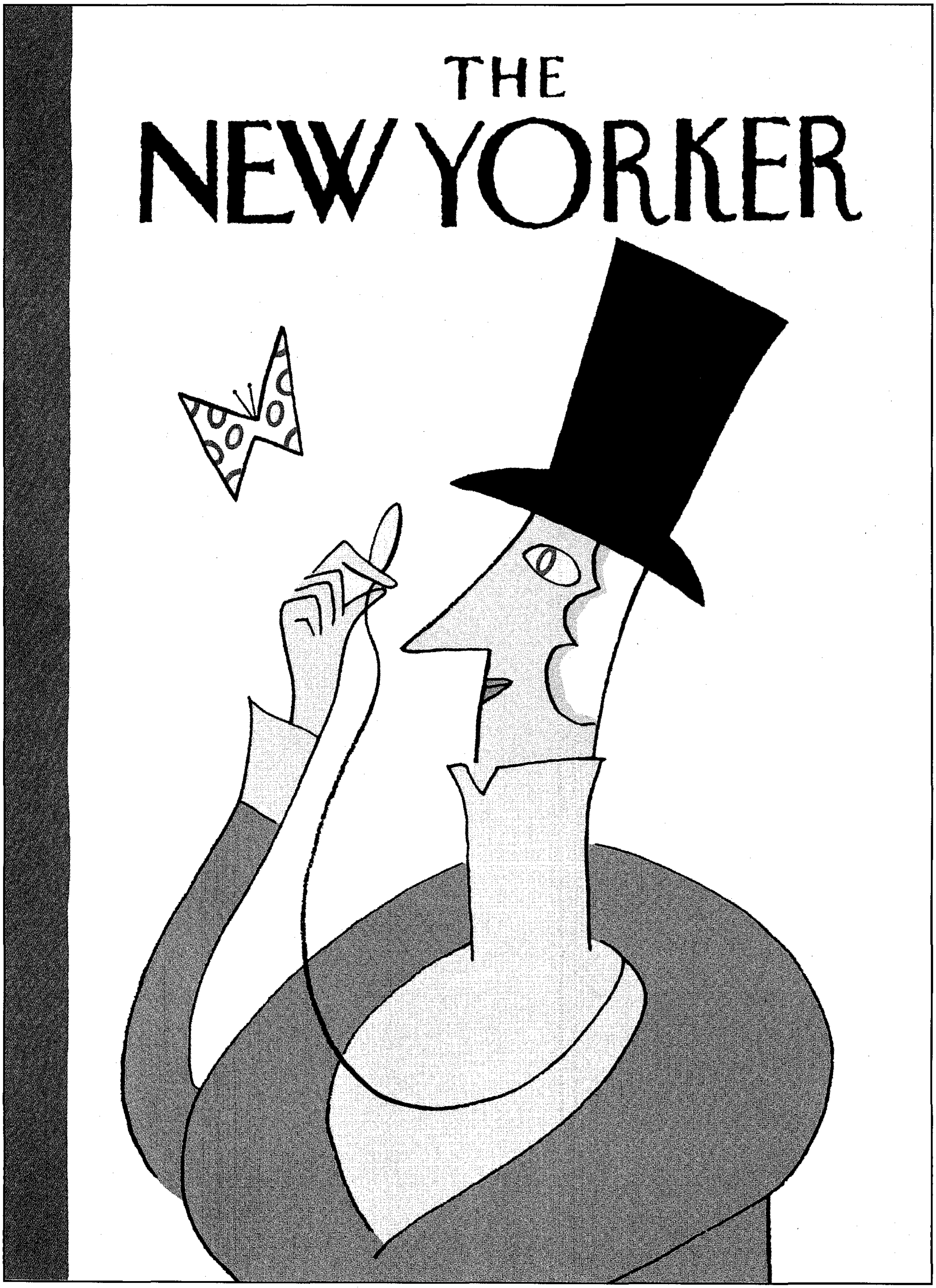
Edward Koren

The message was confusing because the magazine, in those days, was confused. *The New Yorker* was launched as a gossipy, facetious weekly for in-the-know Manhattanites, a sort of Jazz Age *Spy*. The cover was drawn by Rea Irvin, the magazine's first art editor, who also designed the distinctive *New Yorker* headline type. His character acquired a name, Eustace Tilley, in a series of humor pieces, by Corey Ford, that ran in the magazine during its first year, and that pretended to provide an inside look at the making of *The New Yorker* in a style that spoofed corporate promotional writing. Ford's stories were accompanied by illustrations in which Eustace Tilley turns up, like Waldo, in various scenes—for instance, supervising the felling of "specially grown trees to make paper for *The New Yorker*."

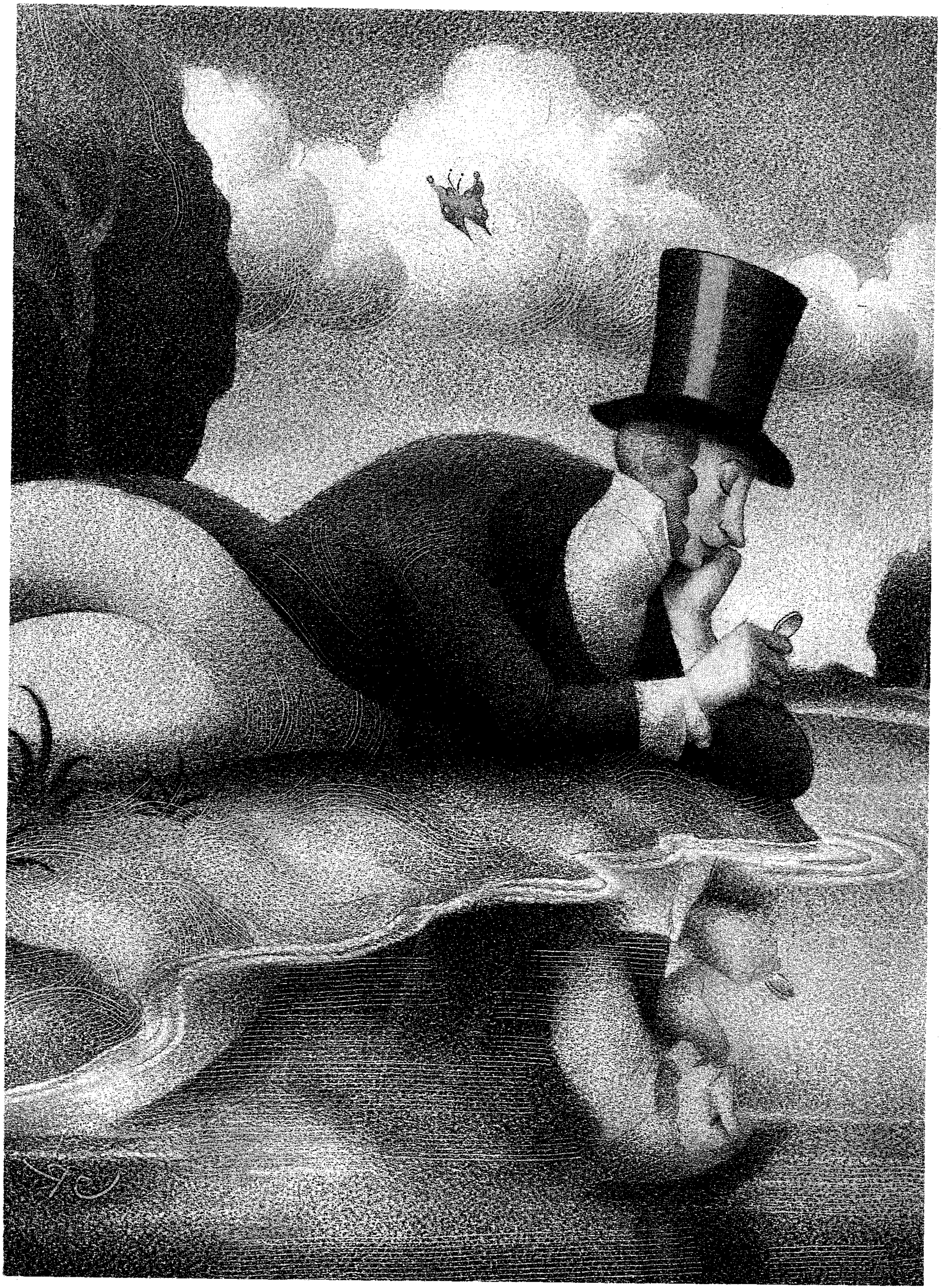
Ford's pieces were commissioned so that there would be something to run on pages that advertisers were not buying. Advertisers were not buying because they were not sure what *The New Yorker* was. Neither were the editors. The second issue ran a mock apology for the first. "There didn't seem to be much indication of purpose and we felt sort of naked in our apparent aimlessness," the magazine confessed. It knew its audience, which was educated, reasonably well-off New Yorkers. It just didn't know how to reach them. Circulation began to drop; by fall, it stood at around twelve thousand, and the publisher nearly pulled out. Then things picked up. Janet Flanner and Lois Long, a fashion writer, joined the magazine, along with the editor Katharine Angell. Advertising deals were signed with Saks and B. Altman department stores. In 1926, E. B. White came aboard, and, a year later, he brought James Thurber along. The knowingness and the name-dropping that characterized the early issues disappeared. And Eustace Tilley has shown up on almost every anniversary cover since.

New Yorker readers have become used to him, but it's not much clearer eighty years later what he's supposed to represent. Beginning in 1994, efforts were made to do something to his image, which seems, after all, to have little connection to New York City. (Irvin derived it from an 1834 drawing of a Count D'Orsay, "man of Fashion in Early Victorian Period," that he found reproduced in the costume section of the Encyclopædia Britannica.) After the manner of contemporary art (also of contemporary advertising), the iconography has been parodied, inverted, subverted, and perverted. The man-butterfly binary has been deconstructed, producing a butterfly staring at a man. Species-centrism has been attacked by dressing a dog in the top hat and collar. There has been a female Tilley, an African-American Tilley, and a punk Tilley. On these pages, we introduce some new post-Irvin Tilleys. For two years, in the late nineteen-nineties, there was no anniversary issue, but now the issue is back, and so is Tilley. There is no getting rid of him. He's the enigma who came to stay.

—*Louis Menand*


THE NEW YORKER

Philippe Petit-Roulet



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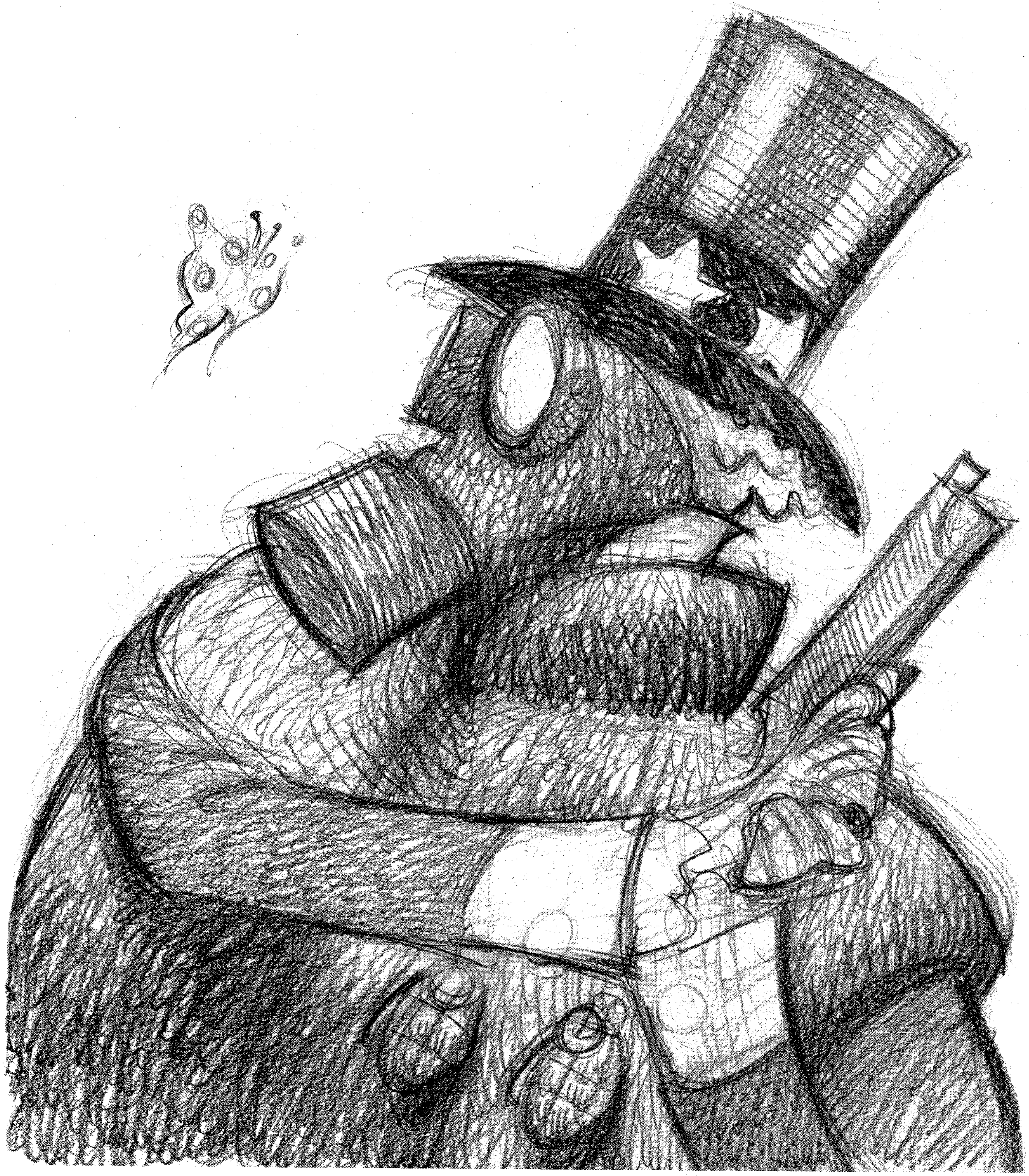
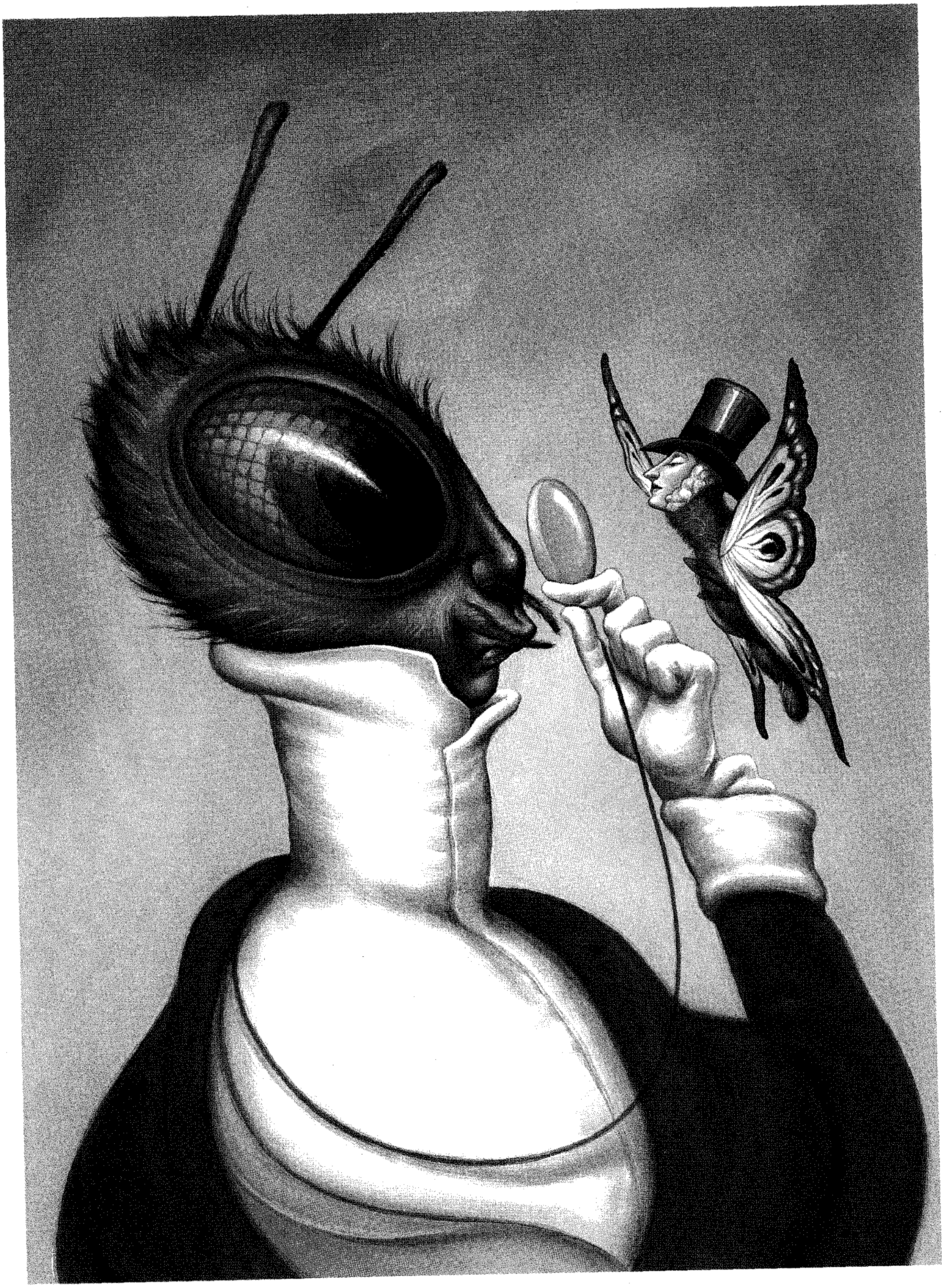


Carter Goodrich



Anita Kunz

Istvan Banyai

A REPORTER AT LARGE

CLIMBING THE REDWOODS

A scientist explores a lost world over Northern California.

BY RICHARD PRESTON

The coast redwood tree is an evergreen conifer, a member of the cypress family, which grows in valleys and on slopes of mountains along the coast of Central and Northern California, mostly within ten miles of the sea. The scientific name of the tree, which is usually simply called a redwood, is *Sequoia sempervirens.* A coast redwood has fibrous, furrowed bark, flat needles, and small seed-bearing cones the size of olives. Its heartwood is the color of old claret and is extremely resistant to rot. It has a lemony scent. Redwoods flourish in wet, rainy, foggy habitats. The realm of the redwoods starts in Big Sur and runs northward along the coast to Oregon; fourteen and a half miles up the Oregon coast, the redwoods abruptly stop.

The main trunk of a coast redwood can be up to twenty-five feet in diameter near its base, and in some cases it can extend upward from the ground for more than two hundred and fifty feet before the first strong branches emerge and the crown of the tree begins to flare. The crown of a tall coast redwood is typically an irregular spire that can look like the plume of a rocket taking off. Very few trees of any species today other than redwoods are more than three hundred feet tall. The tallest living coast redwoods are between three hundred and fifty and three hundred and seventy feet high—the equivalent of a thirty-five-to-thirty-seven-story building.

In its first fifty years of life, a coast redwood can grow from a seed into a tree that's a hundred feet tall. Redwoods grow largest and tallest in silty floodplains near creeks, in spots that are called alluvial flats. There, a redwood can suck up huge amounts of water and nutrients, and it is protected from wind, which can throw a redwood down. In its next thousand years, it grows faster, adding mass at an accelerating rate. The living portion of a tree is a layer of tissue called the cambium, which exists underneath the bark. If the cambium of one of the bigger coast redwoods were to be spread out into a flat sheet, it would be nearly half the size of a football field. Each year, a coast redwood can add one millimetre of new growth to its cambium, or the equivalent of one ton of new wood.

As a young redwood reaches maturity, it typically loses its top. The top either breaks off in a storm or dies and falls off. A redwood reacts to the loss by sending out new trunks, which typically appear in the crown, high up in the tree, and point at the sky like the fingers of an upraised hand. The new trunks shoot upward from larger limbs, travelling parallel to the main trunk, or they emerge directly out of the main trunk and run alongside it. The new trunks send out their own branches, which eventually spit out more trunks through the crown. The resulting structure is what mathematicians call a fractal; botanists say that the tree is forming reiterations. The redwood is repeating its shape again and again.

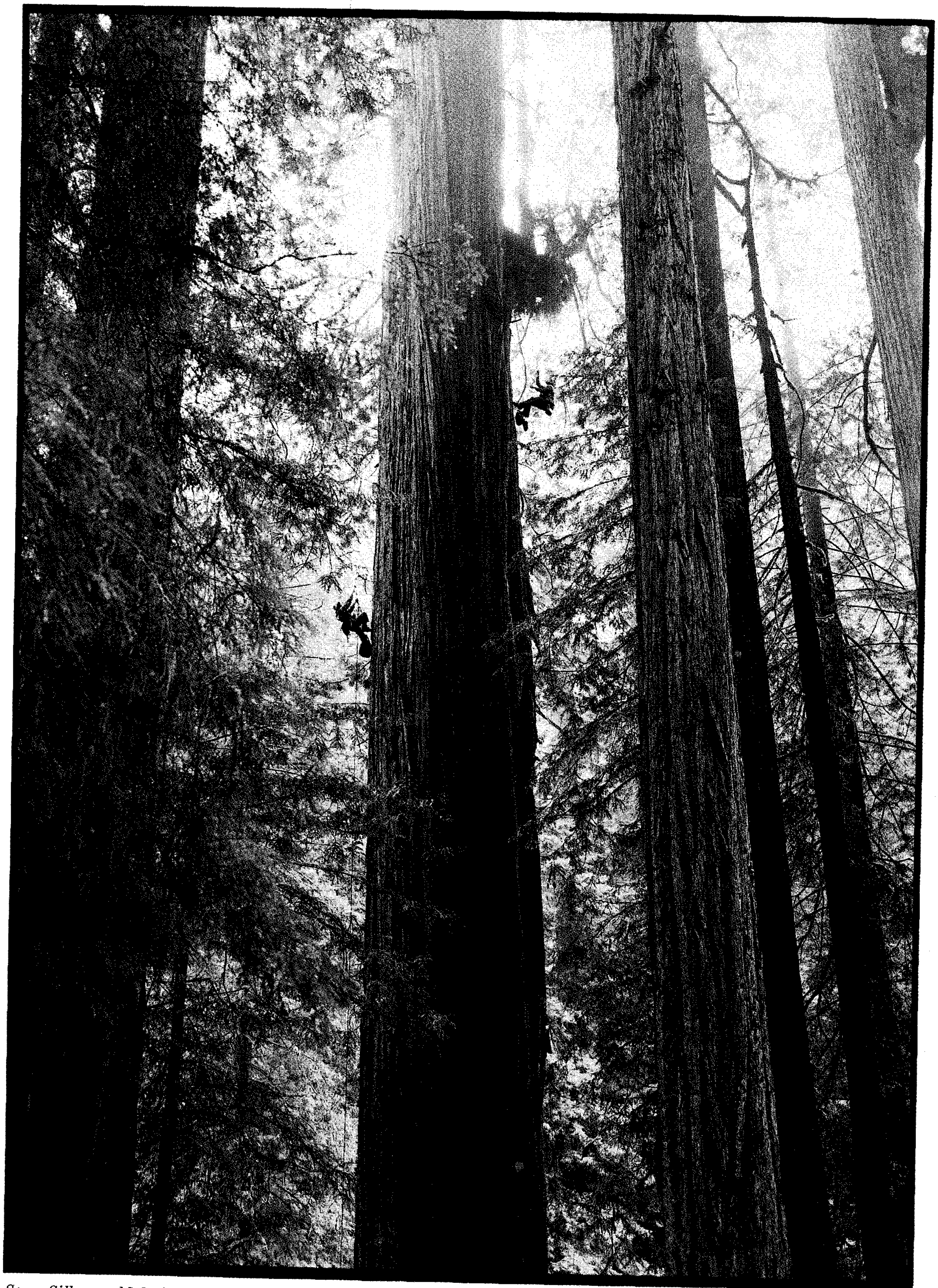
With the passing of centuries, the reiterated trunks begin to touch one another here and there. The trunks fuse and flow together at these spots, like Silly Putty melting into itself. The bases of the extra trunks bloat out, and become gnarled masses of living wood called buttresses. In the crowns of the largest redwoods, bridges of living redwood are flung horizontally from branch to branch and from trunk to trunk, cross-linking the crown with a natural system of struts and cantilevers. This strengthens the crown and may help it to grow bigger, until it can look like a thunderhead coming to a boil. There are often blackened chambers and holes in the trunks—fire caves, caused by big forest fires. The tree survives and regrows its burned parts, and it continues to thrust out new trunks.

Botanists judge the size of a tree by the amount of wood it contains, not by its height. By that measure, the largest species of tree is the giant sequoia, a type of cypress that is closely related to the coast redwood. The biggest living giant sequoia trees have fatter and more massive trunks than the coast redwoods. But the coast redwood is the tallest species of tree on earth.

Extremely large coast redwoods are referred to as redwood giants. The very biggest are called titans. Currently, about a hundred and twenty coast redwoods are known to be more than three hundred and fifty feet tall. Eighty per cent of them live in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, along the Eel River, in Humboldt County, in Northern California. No one knows exactly how old the biggest coast redwoods are, because nobody has ever drilled into one of them to count its annual growth rings. Botanists think that the oldest redwoods may be somewhere between two thousand and three thousand years old. They seem to be roughly the age of the Parthenon.

One day in early 2003, I arrived at the office of Stephen C. Sillett, on the campus of Humboldt State University, in Arcata, a coastal town in Humboldt County. Winter storms had been passing through, and Arcata smelled of redwoods and the sea. Sillett is an associate professor of botany, and he is the principal explorer of the redwood-forest canopy, the three-dimensional labyrinth that exists in the air above the forest floor. He is one of the world's better tree climbers. One reason I had come to Humboldt was to see Sillett climb a redwood.

Sillett conducts his research with a group of graduate students and a few other scientists, whom he trains in advanced tree-climbing techniques. I had never met Sillett, and didn't quite know what to expect. "Steve can come across



Steve Sillett and Marie Antoine in Adventure, which is three hundred and thirty-four feet tall. Photographs by Ruven Afanador.

"I already assisted with your birth—what do you want now?"

• •

as brusque, but it's because he's so focussed," his brother, Scott Sillett, explained to me one day on the telephone. Scott is an ornithologist at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C., who studies songbirds. "Steve is one of the most passionate and curious scientists I know. I love birds, but even I can get sick of them. Steve never seems to get sick of trees."

I found Steve Sillett in his office, a windowless room with white walls, stretched out in a chair before a computer, working on some data from the canopy. He was wearing olive-green climbing pants, a pullover shirt, and mud-stained climbing boots. Sillett is thirty-seven years old, of medium height, and he has a lean body with flaring shoulders, huge forearms, and adept-looking hands. His hair is light brown and feathery, and his eyes, set deep in a square face, are dark brown and watchful. Sillett's manner is usually laid-back, but he can act fast. He once fell out of the top of a big redwood named Pleiades I, which is three hundred and ten feet tall. Dropping through the air, he reached out and caught a branch with one hand. This ripped his shoulder out of its socket and tore a bit of flesh out of his hand, but it also stopped his fall. He ended up hanging from the branch by a bleeding hand and a dislocated shoulder, twenty-eight stories above the ground and feeling a bit surprised with himself. "We're primates. Those opposable thumbs are awesome," he explained.

The forest canopies of the earth are realms of unfathomed nature, and they are largely a mystery. They are also disappearing—they are being logged off rapidly, burned away, turned into fragments and patches—and they are perhaps being altered by changes in the earth's climate caused by human activities. Sillett said, "We want to try to understand the basic biology of the redwood canopy, because it will give us a blueprint for how things should work in an old-growth redwood forest."

Redwoods are able to reshape the local climate and environment in which they live. They change the chemical nature of the soil, and they assume control of vital resources in the forest, particularly sunlight and water. "We're trying to get a feel for how much water is stored in the canopy—in the trees, in their foliage, in the canopy soil, and in other plants that live in the canopy," Sillett said. "There's a lot of water up here. These trees are controlling the movement of the water in this forest. How do they do that? What will happen to these forests as the climate changes with global warming? The way the world is going, our work in the canopy could be just a task of documenting something before it winks out."

In 1995, Sillett received a Ph.D. in botany from Oregon State University, in Corvallis. Soon afterward, he took his present job, at Humboldt, and began to explore the old-growth redwood canopy. No scientist had been there before. The tallest redwoods were regarded as inaccessible towers, shrouded in foliage and almost impossible to climb, since the lowest branches on a redwood can be twenty-five stories above the ground. From the moment he entered redwood space, Steve Sillett began to see things that no one had imagined. The general opinion among biologists at the time—this was just eight years ago—was that the redwood canopy was a so-called "redwood desert" that contained not much more than the branches of redwood trees. Instead, Sillett discovered a lost world above Northern California.

The old-growth redwood-forest canopy, Sillett found, is packed with epiphytes, plants that grow on other plants. They commonly occur on trees in tropical rain forests, but nobody really expected to find them in profusion in Northern California. There are hanging gardens of ferns, in masses that Sillett calls fern mats. The fern mats can weigh tons when they are saturated with rainwater; they are the heaviest masses of epiphytes which have been found in any forest canopy on earth. Layers of earth, called canopy soil, accumulate over the centuries on wide limbs and in the tree's crotches—in places where trunks spring from trunks—and support a variety of animal and plant life. In the crown of a giant redwood named Fangorn, Sillett found a layer of canopy soil that is three feet deep. Near the top of Laurelin, or the Tree of the Sun, which is three hundred and sixty-eight feet tall and still growing, Sillett found a huge, sheared-off trunk with a rotted, damp center. Masses of shrubs are growing out of the wet rot, sending their roots down into Laurelin.

Sillett and his students have found small, pink earthworms of an unidentified species in the beds of soil in the redwoods. A Humboldt colleague of Sillett's named Michael A. Camann has collected aquatic crustaceans called copepods living in the fern mats. The scientists have not yet been able to determine the copepods' species. Sillett said, "They commonly dwell in the gravel in streams around here." He can't explain how they got into the redwood canopy. A former graduate student of Sillett's named James C. Spickler has been studying wandering salamanders in the redwood canopy. The wandering salamander is brown and gold, and it feeds on insects, mainly at night. Spickler found that the salamanders were breeding in the redwood canopy, which suggests that they never visit the ground—this population of salamanders appears to live its entire life cycle in the redwood canopy.

Old redwood trees are infested with thickets of huckleberry bushes. In the fall, Sillett and his colleagues stop and rest inside huckleberry thickets, hundreds of feet above the ground, and gorge on the berries. He and his students have also taken censuses of other shrubs growing in the redwood canopy: currant bushes, elderberry bushes, and salmonberry bushes, which occasionally put out fruit, too. Sillett has discovered small trees—wild bonsai—in the canopy. The species include California bay laurel trees, western hemlocks, Douglas firs, and tan oaks. Sillett once found an eight-foot Sitka spruce growing on the limb of a giant redwood.

Over the years, forest-canopy researchers have developed a variety of techniques for gaining access to forest canopies. These include towers, walkways, balloons, high-powered binoculars (the researcher looks at the canopy but doesn't go there), direct tree climbing (which is what Sillett does), and construction cranes. There is, for example, the Wind River Canopy Crane, which is situated in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, in southwest Washington. The crane has a gondola at the end of a long arm, which can deliver a scientist to any point in the canopy that's within reach, including to the tips of branches, and the gondola can go as high as two hundred and twenty feet above the ground. The disadvantage of a crane is that it's expensive to operate, and it's rooted in one spot. The Wind River crane is able to penetrate roughly one and a half million cubic metres of tree space. Steve Sillett and his colleagues are able to explore roughly twenty billion cubic metres of old-growth redwood forest. In any event, the Wind River crane wouldn't be able to get a person into the crown of the taller giant redwood trees, since many of them are mostly or entirely above the highest reach of the crane.

When Sillett and his colleagues are aloft in redwood space, and moving around from place to place, they make use of tree-climbing ropes and a safety harness called a tree-climbing saddle. They wear helmets and soft-soled boots (spikes can damage a tree). Tree climbers normally hang suspended in midair in a harness attached to ropes looped over solid parts of the tree above them called anchor points. The ropes are attached to the climber's saddle by means of carabiners, which are strong aluminum or steel clips. Tree climbers often move very lightly over branches, keeping most of their weight suspended on their anchor ropes. A skilled tree climber can travel horizontally or at diagonals through the crown of a tree while he's hanging in midair, and not even touch the tree with his body. He may toss a length of rope here or there, getting the rope over a new anchor point, and then he can pull himself to a different place in the tree.

Tree climbing is quite different from rock climbing. Rock climbers move upward over a vertical surface of stone by using their hands and feet to obtain friction and support. They are not suspended from taut ropes (except sometimes in the type of rock climbing called aid climbing). A rock climber advances upward while a safety rope, held by a person called a belayer, trails loosely below him. The rope is there in case the rock climber loses his grip on the stone and falls. In tree climbing, the rope is used as the main tool for gaining height and for moving around. The bark of a tree is crumbly and soft, and a climber can't get any kind of secure grip on it with his hands and feet. The branches of a tree can snap off.

The method by which Steve Sillett and his colleagues climb redwoods is known as a modified arborist-style climbing technique. Arborists, or tree surgeons, get around in trees using a special soft, thick, strong rope. When the rope is passed over an anchor point, it is formed into a long loop or noose, which is tied with a sliding knot called the Blake's hitch. The Blake's hitch was invented in 1990 by a tree surgeon in California named Jason Blake. He popularlized it among arborists. It looks a little bit like a hangman's knot, though it functions in a different way. It is a friction knot—it can grip securely on a length of rope, or it can slide on the rope, depending on how the knot is manipulated. By sliding a Blake's hitch, a tree climber can shorten or lengthen a loop of rope over an anchor point, and move upward or downward. A climber can also lock the Blake's hitch, and thereby hang motionless.

In the late nineteen-eighties, Sillett was a biology major at Reed College, in Portland, Oregon, and had already decided that he wanted to become a canopy scientist; for his senior thesis at Reed, he began climbing tall Douglas-fir trees. A few years later, when he was a graduate student at Oregon State, he got a telephone call from an arborist named Kevin Hillery, who had happened to read Sillett's college thesis. Sillett told him that he was using boots with spikes, called climbing spurs, and a short rope called a flipline to get himself up the trunks of the trees—he was climbing the Douglas firs in the way that an electrical worker climbs up a telephone pole. Hillery said, "If you need spurs to climb a tree, you shouldn't be climbing trees." He offered to teach Sillett the arborist-style climbing technique. Sillett soon began developing his own style of climbing. Sillett's method differs from the classical arborist technique in that he ascends into the crown of a redwood along a single strand of rope called the main rope. Once he gets up into the crown, he detaches himself from the main rope and moves around using a shorter length of rope. (Most arborists don't ascend trees on a main rope, since most trees aren't tall enough to require one.)

The process of getting into the crown of a tree is known to tree climbers as the entry. To accomplish an entry into a redwood, Sillett ties a fishing line to an arrow and then, with a hunting bow, shoots the arrow over a strong branch somewhere in the lower crown of the tree. He then ties a nylon cord to one end of the fishing line. By pulling on the other end, he drags the cord over the branch. He ties a rope—which will be the main rope—to the cord and drags it over the branch. Now the main rope is hanging in an upside-down U over a branch in the crown of the tree. He ties one end to a smaller, nearby tree, and then he climbs up the loose, hanging end of the rope using mechanical ascenders (of the kind that rock climbers and cavers use). Sillett says, "You loft yourself into the lower crown on a main rope, and then you detach yourself and move from branch to branch."

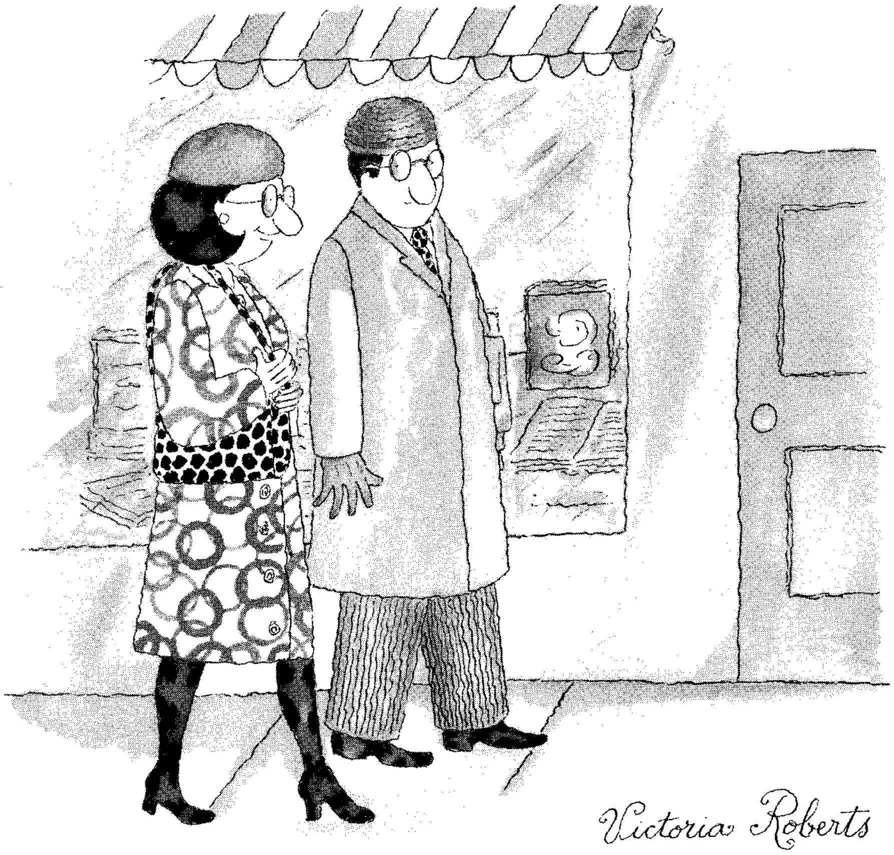
To do so, Sillett uses a complicated rig of rope and carabiners, sixty feet long, which he calls a double-ended split-tail lanyard, or a motion lanyard. The lanyard works in the same basic way as does Spider-Man's silk. A climber can attach either end to an anchor point. By attaching alternate ends, he can move around while always staying attached to the tree by at least one strand of rope. Sillett is not immune to a fear of heights. At odd moments when he's aloft in the deep canopy, often when he's hanging from a branch on a motion lanyard, a kind of waking dream flashes over him. For a second, he seems to feel something break, and then he seems to feel himself turning in space as he falls for twenty or thirty stories along the trunk of a giant coast redwood.

The crown of an ancient coast redwood can bristle with rotting extra trunks, and it can be crisscrossed with dead limbs that may be up to several feet in diameter, and there can be broken-off dead branches hanging in the foliage, which are called widow-makers. The twitching movement of a climbing rope can stir loose a widow-maker, and a falling branch can tear off other branches, triggering a cascade of spinning redwood spars the size of railroad ties. A falling branch can spike itself five feet into the ground. Redwoods can have pieces of dead wood in them that are bigger than Chevrolet Suburbans. Sillett carries a little folding saw with him and uses it to cut away any small, hazardous dead branches, "but with the big hazards we just have to rely on hope," he says. Redwoods occasionally shed whole sections of themselves. Sillett calls this process calving. The tree releases a kind of woodberg, and as it collapses it gives off a roar that can be heard for a mile or two, and it leaves the area around the calved redwood looking as if a tank battle had been fought there. A calving event would obliterate any humans in the tree. Sillett told me, "The thing I fear most is a falling branch that hooks on my rope. It would slide down the rope into me, and it would tear through my body cavity. You are a grape hanging on a vine, and a falling branch can pop you."

The tallest living part of a tree is called the leader. The leader of a coast redwood is often a delicate spindle, covered with papery bark, and its branches are brittle. When Sillett reaches one, he sometimes takes off his boots and socks and hangs them on a branch, and then he climbs barefoot to the top. "It makes sense to have a form of communication with the tree," he says.

In the summer of 2000, while Sillett was attending a scientific conference, he met a canopy scientist named Marie Antoine. They started climbing redwoods together, and were married soon afterward. Antoine, a slender woman in her late twenties, was born and raised in Canada. She is an expert in lichens and a lecturer at Humboldt State. Sillett and Antoine live in a small yellow house in the hills overlooking Arcata. They keep their tree-climbing gear in the garage.

In the eighteen-forties, when American settlers arrived in Northern California, the redwood forest amounted to roughly two million acres of virgin, old-growth trees. Loggers began cutting down the redwoods with axes and handsaws, using the wood for making barns, houses, fences, and railroad ties. In the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the introduction of logging machinery, chainsaws, and Caterpillar tractors vastly increased the speed of logging along the



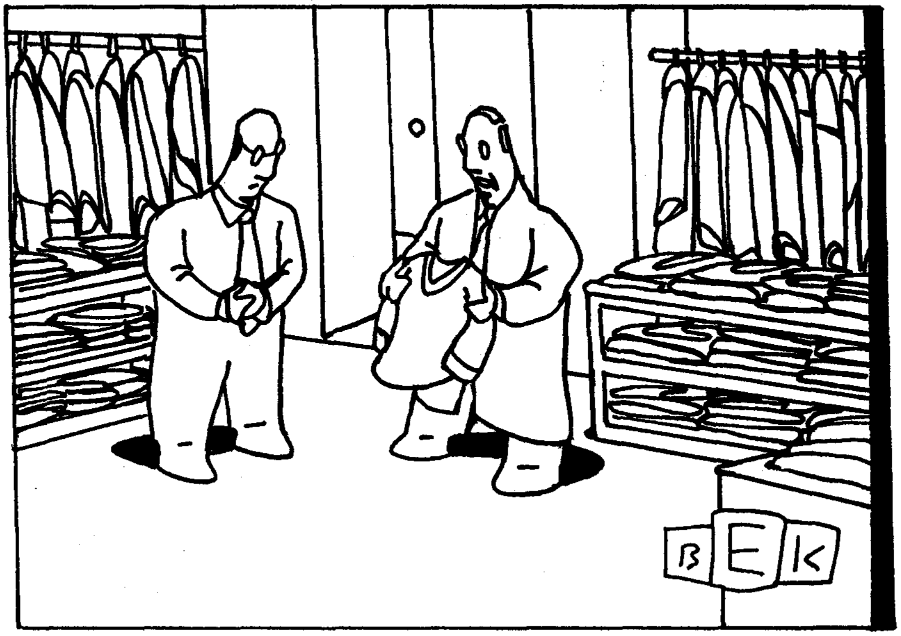
"If you're bored with yourself, imagine how I feel."

northern coast of California, and the old-growth redwood forests began to disappear. Most of these forests ended up being owned by timber companies. As a rule, they carried out clear-cutting operations, in which no tree of any worth was left standing. In all, close to ninety-six per cent of the virgin redwood forest was cut down. Some botanists, including Steve Sillett, believe that during the logging a number of redwood titans were felled that were bigger than any of the living giant sequoia trees are today. In other words, before the logging, the coast redwood was probably the largest tree on earth, not just the tallest.

About ninety thousand acres of old-growth redwoods have remained intact, in patches of protected land. The remaining scraps of the primeval redwood-forest canopy are like three or four fragments of a rose window in a cathedral, and the rest of the window has been smashed and swept away. "Oh, man, the trees that were lost here," Sillett said to me one day as we were driving through the suburbs of Arcata. "This was the most beautiful forest on the planet, and it's almost totally gone. This is such a sore point."

Conservationists won a major victory in 1999, with the signing of a deal known as the Headwaters Agreement, between the federal government and one of the largest redwood-timber companies, Pacific Lumber, which is a subsidiary of Maxxam. The agreement, and subsequent deals, gave the government title to a large part of Pacific Lumber's old-growth redwood tracts, including the seventy-five-hundred-acre Headwaters Forest, half of it virgin redwood, in the mountains southeast of Eureka, California. The government paid Pacific Lumber three hundred and eighty million dollars. However, stretches of virgin redwood forest left on private timber-company lands continued to be logged.

Today, the timber-company lands in Northern California—owned by Pacific Lumber, Green Diamond Resource Company, and others—are managed for high-volume production of young redwood trees. The tracts are logged off on a schedule, typically every fifty years or so. It is increasingly difficult to find any redwood trees growing on timber-company land which are more than eighty years old. Sillett has climbed in these trees. Their crowns are nearly devoid of life. They are a redwood desert.



"Does this come in anything cheap?"

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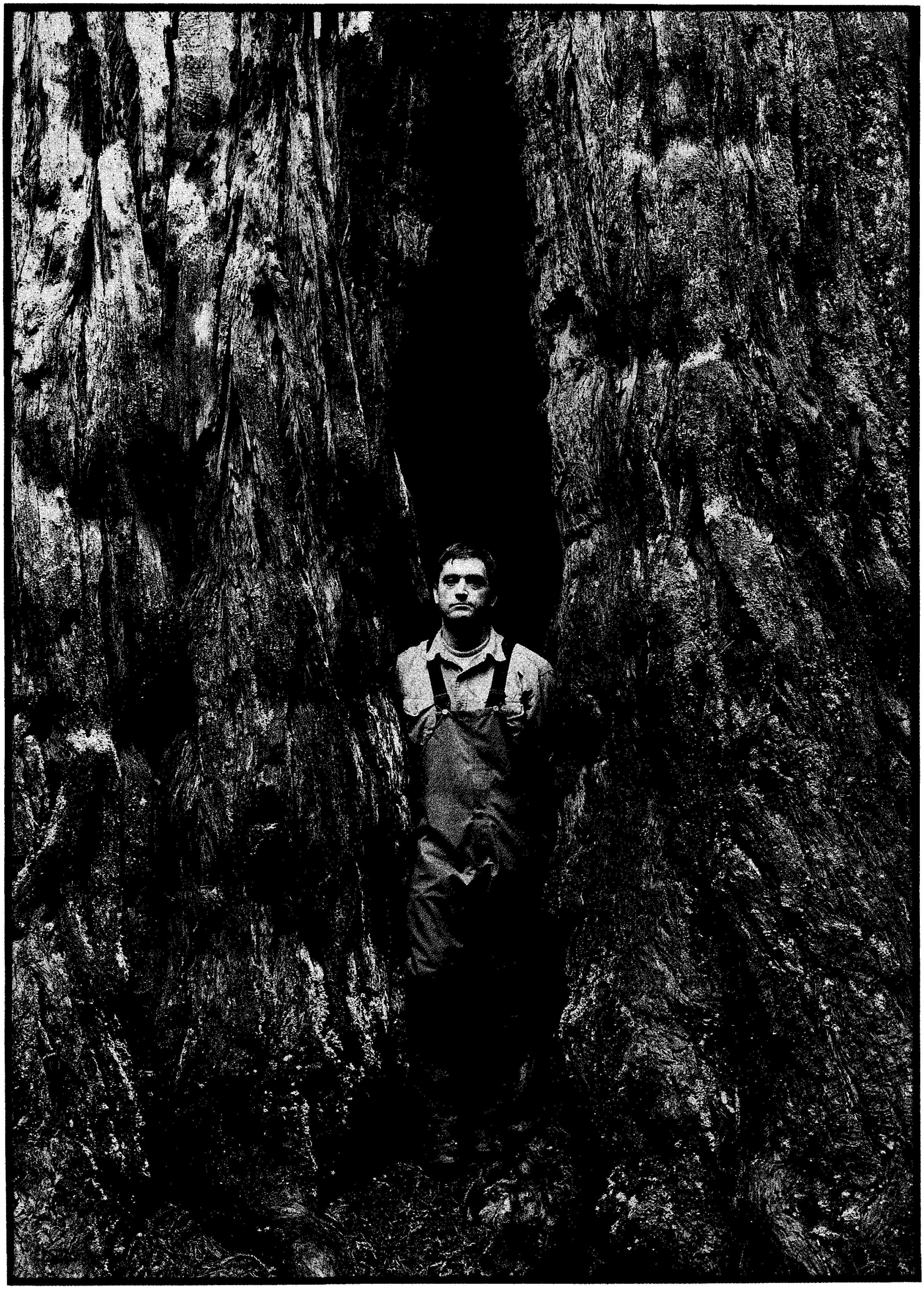
In his office, on the day I first met him, Sillett tapped on a mouse, and a computer-generated image of a grove of redwoods appeared on the screen. "You need to look at some redwood architecture," he said. The grove, he explained, is named the Atlas Grove, and it is in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, which is a sliver of protected old-growth redwood forest that hugs the sea along the northern part of Humboldt County. The computer image was a three-dimensional map of the crowns of the trees in the Atlas Grove; he had made the map from data that he and his associates had gathered in years of climbing them. The Atlas Grove is tiny—it is about three hundred and fifty yards long by thirty-five yards wide—and it is a jam of monstrous redwoods with reiterated crowns. The Atlas Grove may be the oldest grove of living redwoods; although Sillett isn't sure exactly how old it is, judging by the height, the amount of rot in the dead parts of the trees, and the types and abundance of epiphytes, it seems to have come into existence around the time of Julius Caesar. The Atlas Grove was discovered in 1991 by a tall-tree explorer named Michael Taylor, who is a friend of Sillett's. Discovery, in the case of a giant tree, doesn't necessarily mean that the tree has never been seen before—the grove had been known to some park rangers. It means that nobody has understood the tree's size, or has measured it.

Sillett named most of the trees in the grove after Greek gods. (Generally, the discoverer of a redwood names it: Sillett often gives the tree a name only after he's climbed it and gained a sense of its character. There's no formal process—the names are private, known mostly to the botanists who study redwoods.) "That's Prometheus, that's Epimetheus, and that's Atlas—they were all brothers," Sillett said, pointing to the screen. The trees looked something like witches' brooms standing on their handles. He tapped the mouse again, and the images began to rotate. "Atlas has these three huge trunks in its top, like a trident," he said. "Atlas is so full of soil and plants that you get this overwhelming sense of a tree holding up the earth. Here's the Pleiades. And that's Kronos and that's Rhea."

The biggest tree in the Atlas Grove is a redwood titan named Iluvatar. Sillett named the tree after the creator of the universe in J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Silmarillion." "Iluvatar is so complex that you can't tell much about it just by looking at it," he said. On the screen, Iluva-



Sillett in front of Adventure. Its exact location is a secret, known to fewer than twenty people. It may be two thousand years old.

tar rotated slowly, as if we were flying around it in a helicopter. The crown of Iluvatar contains two hundred and ten trunks, and it fills thirty-two thousand cubic yards of space. It took Steve Sillett, Marie Antoine, and four graduate students roughly ten days of climbing apiece to make a 3-D map of the crown. With these data, Sillett, along with an expert in giant trees named Robert Van Pelt, performed a calculation that shows that Iluvatar contains thirty-seven thousand five hundred cubic feet of wood. Iluvatar is one of the largest living things on the planet.

I asked Sillett where the Atlas Grove was, exactly.

He gave me a guarded look. "It's something you can't print."

Botanists are secretive about the locations of rare plants. They fear that any contact between humans and rare plants can be disastrous for the plants. Sillett is particularly worried about recreational tree climbers. Recreational tree climbing is an evolving sport, or emerging oddity, which is practiced by a thousand or so people in the United States but is rapidly growing in popularity. It apparently got its start in 1983, when a certified arborist in Atlanta named Peter Jenkins began teaching all sorts of people, including children, how to climb trees safely using a rope and a harness and the arborist climbing technique. He founded a tree-climbing school called Tree Climbers International. The classroom of Tree Climbers International consists of two white-oak trees on a plot of land near downtown Atlanta.

Sillett is widely admired by recreational tree climbers, but his feelings about them are laced with foreboding. "Not only are redwoods sensitive to damage from climbing but the whole habitat of the redwood canopy is fragile," Sillett explained, that day in his office. "It cannot survive without damage if people start climbing around in it for recreational reasons." He believes that recreational climbers would try to climb the biggest and tallest redwoods if they knew their exact locations, and they wouldn't bother to get anyone's permission. Climbing a tree without permission is an accepted part of the culture of recreational tree climbing. It is called doing a ninja climb or poaching a tree.

The U.S. National Park Service is in charge of issuing research permits for the parks where most of the remaining giants and titans among the coast redwoods stand. Sillett and other canopy scientists are allowed to climb in the parks only between the middle of September and the end of January each year. During the rest of the year, the National Park Service closes the redwoods to climbing in order to allow the spotted owl and a seabird called the marbled murrelet to nest in the redwoods without being disturbed.

Sillett closed the view of the Atlas Grove on his computer, and stood up. "So, have you seen enough?"

"Not really. I was wondering if I could climb in the redwood canopy with you."

He didn't answer. He looked me over with a kind of professional coolness. His eyes seemed to focus on my face and neck, my torso, and my hands. "Are you a tree climber?"

"Yes, I am."

"These trees are gnarly. All it takes to get yourself killed is one mistake."

I told him that I knew something about climbing trees. I'd come across the Tree Climbers International school one day while I was surfing on the Internet. I had never really thought about tree climbing; it sounded weirdly appealing. I got a flight to Atlanta, and I began to learn the art of movement in a forest canopy. By the time I met Steve Sillett, I had had about twenty hours of basic training. In addition, I had climbed half a dozen trees near my house, which is in New Jersey. But, in Sillett's view, I knew essentially nothing about climbing redwoods. I had never heard of some of the advanced equipment that Sillett uses, like the motion lanyard; in fact, many professional tree climbers have never heard of it, either.

Sillett said that while he was happy to have me walk around on the ground in the redwoods with him and his colleagues, he was not interested in taking me up into the canopy, at least not immediately. (His brother, Scott, who climbs with him every now and then, explained later, "It's definitely true that Steve doesn't trust the climbing skills of others. It takes such focus to climb safely.")

And so I returned to Atlanta for further training. One day in April, I found myself seventy feet above the ground, dangling from a branch on a rope like a Christmas ornament, practicing the skills needed to get oneself safely from place to place in a tree. It was a cool, blue day, and the wind was blowing. I was suspended at the point of a V formed by two loops of ropes. By sliding Blake's hitches, I shortened one loop while I lengthened the other. This changed the shape of the V, from an asymmetrical V oriented toward the left to an asymmetrical V oriented toward the right. In this way, I travelled horizontally in midair to a different place in the tree. In the distance, the rectilinear towers of Atlanta glittered in the sun.

Back home in New Jersey, I ordered from an arborist supply company sixty feet of half-inch tree-climbing rope, four carabiners, and two split tails, which are short pieces of rope that are tied with Blake's hitches to the longer piece of rope. When these things arrived, I assembled a motion lanyard. At first, I practiced with the lanyard while I was standing on the ground—I heaved its ends up over branches in a maple tree in my front yard. Then, wearing a climbing saddle and a helmet, I raised myself into the air with the lanyard, and got about six feet off the ground. In an ash tree that grows off to the side of my house, I ascended sixty feet by throwing the ends of the motion lanyard over higher and higher anchor points—that is, I lanyarded my way to the top of the tree. I extended my circle of climbing, and began to explore a forest canopy that ranges up a hillside above my house.

The forest canopy on my hill extends from about fifty to a hundred feet above the ground. It is composed of the crowns of sugar maples, red oaks, white oaks, chestnut oaks, hickories, ash trees, tulip poplars, and some tall, beautiful old beech trees. As I became more adept at movement in trees, I became better able to go laterally, or on diagonals, through the air. Birds seem to pay little attention to a person hanging on a rope in a forest, and it's not always clear that they are able to identify such an object as a human being. Sometimes flocks of birds sweep through the canopy and divide around a climber or move beneath him. Flying squirrels are tame in the canopy. I've reached out a finger and stroked their fur on occasion. (They close their eyes when you stroke them, but they soon tire of it, and plummet off the branch, catch the air, and soar away.) During climbs into taller trees, I was occasionally able to look down on the backs of birds, which shine with reflected sunlight as they move through the green depths of the canopy, like schools of fish.

Sillett and George W. Koch, a tree physiologist from Northern Arizona University, and a graduate student named Anthony R. Ambrose have installed electronic monitoring systems in seven of the biggest and tallest redwoods. The monitoring systems consist of weather stations at various spots in the trees, and different kinds of bio-probes, and the systems are linked together with up to half a mile of data cables strung in each tree. The scientists are trying to learn how redwoods move water through their trunks and branches and how they manage to grow so tall.

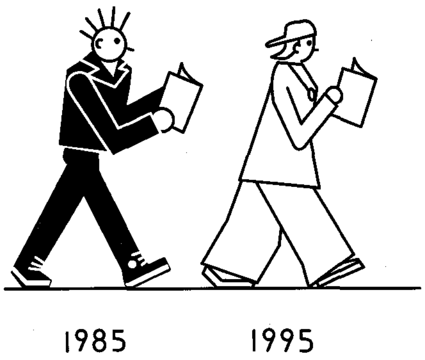
George Koch is a lanky, genial man in his forties, with knotted arms and an easygoing manner. Sillett taught him how to climb trees. "I'm like a kid in a candy shop, climbing these three-hundred-and-sixty-foot-tall trees with Steve," Koch said to me one day when I visited him in Arcata. "The overwhelming question for me is what determines the height of a tree. At around three hundred and seventy feet, the tallest redwoods seem to be approaching a ceiling, which is based on a limit in height to which any plant can lift water. Why aren't the redwoods six hundred feet tall?"

Exactly how an extremely tall tree delivers water to its top is a matter of deep interest to Koch and Sillett. Trees bring water upward from their roots through a network of microscopic pipes called the xylem. The pipes are unbroken from the bottom to the top of a redwood. It takes a few weeks for water that is absorbed in a redwood's roots to get to the top of the tree. A redwood can move water upward through its pipes against two million pascals of negative pressure. (The pascal is a standard measure of pressure used by physicists, and negative pressure is basically a sucking force.) Sillett and Koch have been looking for an engineered system that sucks water at two million pascals, so that they can do experiments. But they can't find such a system. Apparently, redwoods are better at pulling water than any human technology is.

In a spell of dry years, air bubbles seem to form in a redwood's pipes and stop the continuous flow of water, and the top dies and usually falls off. In wetter periods, a redwood regrows its top. "Redwoods have an incredible ability to reiterate new trunks," Koch went on. "A side branch will take off and shoot skyward, and in a matter of a hundred years it will become the new leader—the new top—of the tree."

In any ecosystem in which they occur, redwoods tend to dominate. They tower above other species of trees, and they shade them out, killing them or making it nearly impossible for them to grow. Trees are horrible to one another, and redwoods are viciously aggressive. They drop large pieces of dead wood on smaller neighboring trees, which typically shatters the tree. Sillett calls this phenomenon "redwood bombing." In this way, a giant redwood suppresses and kills trees growing near it, including hemlocks, spruces, Douglas firs, and big-leaf maple trees. A giant redwood can clear a DMZ around its base, an area covered with redwood debris mixed with twisted and dead trees of other species.

Redwoods are monoecious, which means that the plant is both male and female. The female organs of the tree are its round, knobby seed cones. A redwood's male organs are small, nubbin-like cones, called strobili, which appear at the tips of branches and release pollen. The grains of pollen contain sperm cells that fertilize egg cells inside the female cones, and seeds are produced. Over its lifetime, a redwood can release ten billion seeds. It may be that only one of the seeds gets lucky and becomes a mature redwood tree. If a redwood is sheared off at its base, or if it burns to a blackened spar, it can send up from its roots a circle of small trees, or clones, having DNA identical to the parent tree's. The clones become a ring of redwoods in the forest, forming a structure called a cathedral tree.



Redwoods are exceedingly efficient at gathering light. A grove of redwoods is able to soak up more than ninety per cent of the sunlight falling on the crowns of the trees. Young redwoods are able to survive in dark places, where almost no other trees can survive, since they come into existence in the deep shade of their elders. When an old redwood falls, creating an opening in the canopy, sunlight splashes onto smaller redwoods, and they leap upward, rapidly becoming big trees. Little redwoods can sometimes crop up in thickets of slender trunks.

Scientists suspect that such a group of small redwoods may be joined at its roots, and also may share a common root system with a large redwood nearby—but nobody really knows. The small redwoods and the big redwood may all exchange water and nutrients with one another. It is possible that the root systems of the redwoods in a forest are fused into a web underground, so that they can be thought of as a single living thing. These are all questions that remain unanswered by science.

In the darkness before dawn on a cold November morning near Arcata, Marie Antoine was hurrying around her kitchen. She was singing to herself in a dreamy kind of way. That morning, she wore a gray hooded cashmere sweater, cream-colored slacks, and climbing boots. She tossed a handful of blueberries into a blender. "Steve, do you want a smoothie?"

"Definitely," he answered. He and I were kneeling on the living-room floor, nearby, and he was inspecting a heap of my climbing equipment, which I'd taken out of a duffelbag. He stood up, and led me through a door into the garage, where a hank of climbing rope, sixty feet long, was coiled on a hook on the wall. It was a new rope, and it was bare—it didn't have any carabiners or knots rigged in it. "This is yours, if you want it. I'll tie it up for you."

"I brought my own split tails," I said. I carried the rope back into the living room, and laid it on the floor, and from the duffelbag I took out two split tails and four carabiners, and I tied up my motion lanyard while he watched.

He sipped his smoothie. "Dude, you're doing it. Where did you learn this?"

"I've been practicing a little," I said. I tied the last Blake's hitch and sat back on my heels.

He inspected the knots. "Sweet," he said. He picked up the motion lanyard and handed it to me. "You can stuff it into your climbing bag." A motion lanyard weighs eight pounds. When it isn't in use, it is kept inside a bag, which is normally clipped to the climber's foot stirrup.

The blender whirred. "Which tree are we going to?" Antoine asked.

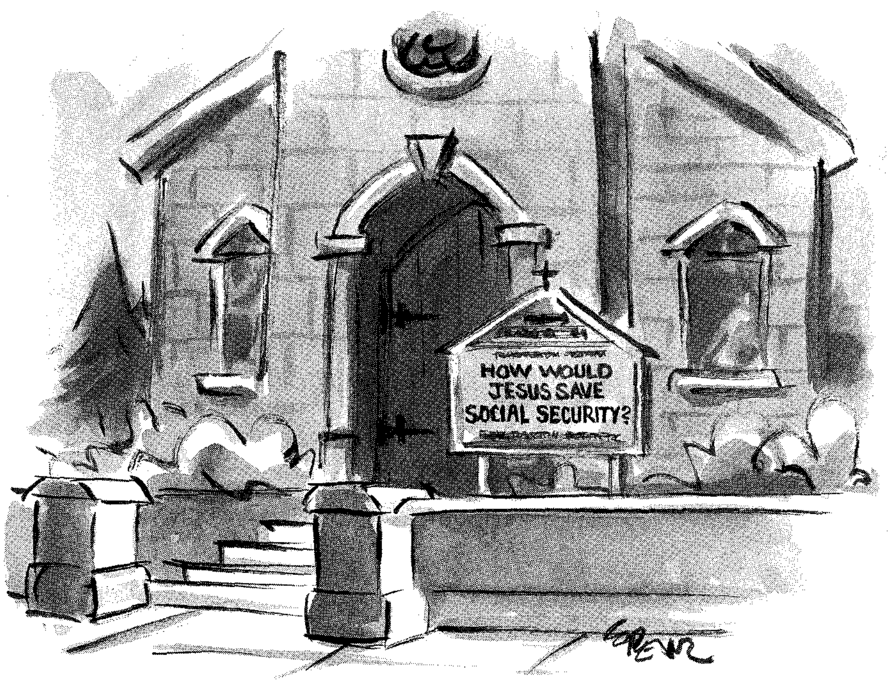
"I think we need to go to Adventure," Sillett said.

Adventure is one of the world's largest-known coast redwoods. It is three hundred and thirty-four feet tall, and it contains thirty-one thousand cubic feet of wood. The main trunk is sixteen feet in diameter near ground level, and it maintains huge girth nearly all the way to the top of the tree. It has a total of forty extra trunks. Adventure has four fire caves in its crown, two of which are large enough for a person to go inside. Much of the center of the tree seems to be rotten. It is in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, a few miles from the Atlas Grove. The precise location of Adventure is a secret that is known to fewer than twenty people, most of whom are botanists. Sillett and Antoine asked me not to reveal its exact location, for fear that recreational tree climbers might try to poach it.

"Adventure Tree is never exactly my first choice," Marie Antoine commented. "My first experience climbing that tree was kind of scary."

Later, I asked her what had been scary about Adventure.

"I got lost in it."


HOW WOULD JESUS SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY?

The stretch of the California coast which includes Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park is covered with temperate rain forest; it receives eighty inches of rain a year. Even so, places in the park consist of patches of open prairie, where herds of elk graze. The redwoods along the edge of the prairie looked like ruined Doric columns. The road went among them, the canopy closed in overhead, and the world grew dark and quiet—redwoods mute sounds. Adventure lives at the bottom of a small valley. We parked and put on backpacks full of tree-climbing gear. Marie Antoine led the way. We went along a trail, and then left the trail and pushed through masses of sword ferns and walked in zigzags around them. The ferns were chest-high and were soaking wet—it had rained during the night. The forest floor consisted of a soft duff of rotting redwood foliage, and it was spattered with redwood sorrel—small, emerald-green plants that have heart-shaped leaves. The trunks of the trees soared into remote crowns. Blades of sunlight angled through the canopy, and they glittered with droplets of water falling from the tips of branches. The sky was pale blue, without a cloud.

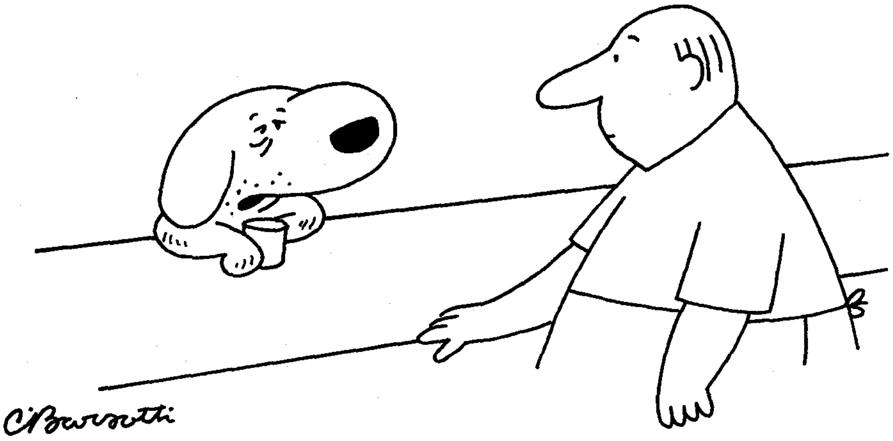
We went down into a gully and arrived at a small creek. A redwood log spanned the creek, forming a natural bridge across it. Adventure grew out of the bank on the other side: I saw a megacylinder of wood with a thermonuclear crown.

We crossed the creek by walking on top of the log, which was slippery, and scrambled up onto the bank at the base of the tree. Sillett opened his backpack and pulled a climbing rope from it. He threaded the rope up through an attachment point higher in the tree and back down to the ground.

The rope was six hundred feet long, dusty black in color, and just ten millimetres thick. It had a breaking strength of three tons—it was strong enough to lift a car. It is sometimes called black tactical rope, and it is favored by the Special Forces for vertical operations at night. The redwood scientists like it because it's lightweight yet superstrong and can seem nearly invisible. "We like to go low-pro," Sillett explained.

The black rope hung down the side of the tree which faced away from the stream, a nearly featureless shaft without any solid branches on it for two hundred and fifty feet. Sillett took one end and tied it to a small tree. The other end dangled loosely down from the anchor point, far up in the crown; he would climb up the dangling end of the rope. This is known as a ground-anchored climbing rope. He put on his helmet and his climbing saddle. He turned on a two-way radio, tested it, and put it in a pocket on his chest.

While Sillett was getting ready to climb, Antoine led me around to the other side of the tree. It consisted of a towering system of extra trunks, some living and some dead, that ran upward along the stream side of Adventure for more than twenty stories. Antoine put her hands in her pockets and stared up into the structure. "The pieces of dead wood shiver fifty feet over your head when you move around in there," she said, peering up into it. "The first time I climbed this tree with Steve, he told me to go to a certain place, and I misunder-



C. Barsotti

"Fetch and roll over weren't enough—then they sent me to philosophy classes."

• •

stood." She ended up wandering among columns of rotten wood, which wobbled and seemed ready to collapse. Finally, she tied herself to a live branch and called her husband on the radio and asked him to come and get her and show her the way out. It took him twenty minutes to find her, and when he did she was embarrassed—she didn't like needing to be rescued.

Back at the other side of the tree, Sillett clamped a pair of mechanical ascenders to the black rope, and then he began to climb upward, sliding his ascenders on the rope in a one-two type of motion which climbers call jugging. A raven called somewhere in the upper canopy. This was followed by a delicate *pip*, *pip*, *pip*, which was coming from somewhere closer to the ground.

Antoine picked up her radio. "Steve, was that a kinglet?"

"It could be a wren tit." He had become a tiny homunculus moving up the bulwark of the tree.

"Adventure just scoffs at the puny humans who try to climb it," Antoine remarked to me.

Sillett vanished into the crown. Time passed. We put on our helmets and saddles. I sat down under a fern, and picked up a sprig of dead redwood foliage. Two mushrooms grew on it.

Our radios crackled. "O.K., Marie, you can go ahead and release the anchor."

"O.K., I'm going to untie the anchor, Steve. I will let you know when it's done." Their radio talk was precise. Any mistake in communication could result in someone's death. (Sillett once saw a climbing companion fall ninety-six feet from a Douglas fir. The friend was a professional climber who had made one small mistake. Miraculously, he lived.) Antoine went over to the small tree and untied the knot. "The anchor is now untied, Steve."

Sillett, up in the tree, tied a knot near the middle of the black rope, and then anchored the knot around a branch, so that both ends of the black rope hung down along different sides of the tree. Antoine and I would simultaneously climb up the opposite ends of the rope.

"You guys can start moving up," Sillett said on the radio.

I clamped my ascenders to my length of the black rope, and I clipped the bag containing the motion lanyard to my foot stirrup. Then I began to jug upward on the rope, along the basal flare of the tree. Twenty feet above the ground, the tree's bark was charred and pitted with fire scars—a small fire on the ground had made the scars, perhaps within the past two hundred years. I kept on jugging. Seventy feet above the ground, I passed a burl, which is a type of benign growth that occurs on trunks. The burl was the size of a pumpkin. I continued climbing upward, along a furrowed wall of wood. Marie Antoine was climbing somewhere around the horizon of the trunk, out of sight.

I reached a height of about a hundred and thirty feet. I was now forty feet higher than I had ever climbed in the canopy in New Jersey, and I was just entering the lower edge of the redwood crown. The light began to brighten. The rope to which I was attached ran straight upward into the crown, and it vibrated with tension from the weight of my body. When canopy scientists want to travel in a circle around the trunk of a large tree, they swing like a pendulum at the end of a long rope. I decided to try it. I planted my feet against the tree, and pushed off. I drifted a considerable distance outward, floating gently away from the trunk. On the forest floor below, the clumps of sword ferns looked like green stars. They turned around—I was spinning. I drifted back to the tree, and kicked off again, harder, and drifted farther away from the tree. It seemed, perhaps, like walking on an asteroid, where there is only slight gravity. The curve of the trunk formed a horizon like that of the small worlds in "The Little Prince."

Marie Antoine appeared—she had circled around the tree to see how I was doing.

The bark was covered with a lumpy white crust that looked like sugar frosting. "What's this stuff?" I asked.

"It's Pertusaria. It's a lichen."

Pertusaria is also called wart lichen. I moved my eyes closer. The warts were mingled with splotches of a grayish-green dust, which was sticking to the bark. The dust, Antoine explained, is another lichen, called Lepraria. It is supposed to resemble the infected skin of a leper. The Lepraria, in turn, was mixed with fingering spurts of a lichen called Cladonia. The Cladonias are among the most beautiful of lichens. They come in wild shapes—trumpets, javelins, stalks of pinto beans, blobs of foam, cups, bones, clouds, and red-capped British soldiers. This Cladonia looked like pale-green tongues of flame. Scattered near it were clusters of orange disks that looked like tiny pumpkin pies. It was a lichen called Ochrolechia, Antoine said. The cracks in the bark were lined with pin lichens—tiny black dots standing up on stalks, like the heads of pins shoved into the wood. It occurred to me that in order to see a giant tree you need a magnifying glass.

We climbed side by side for a distance, until we arrived at a stob—a dead, broken-off stump of a branch. It was surrounded by huckleberry bushes and leatherleaf ferns. The ferns trembled in a breeze that flowed up the side of the tree. The stob was home to what looked like a miniature Japanese garden, about six inches across. We hung suspended in the air before the garden, while Antoine pointed out its sights: “That’s Lepidozia, a liverwort. That’s a little liverwort called Scapania—it looks like tiny ladders.” She pointed to tufts of shimmering, bright-green moss. “That’s Dicranum. It’s all over redwoods.” She estimated that the garden on the stob was several hundred years old.

I climbed for a while on the other side of the tree. I wanted to see the array of trunks which looms over the creek, on the dark side of Adventure. I pendulated in that direction. When I arrived there, I found myself in the middle of a Gothic tower of fusions, bridges, and spires, held up by flying buttresses. The zone was crisscrossed with branches, and the trunks ran out of sight in both directions, upward and downward.

Directly in front of me, at a height of a hundred and eighty feet, was a fire cave. It is called the Upper Fire Cave, and its mouth is plastered with dirt—canopy soil. By gripping on ridges of bark, I was able to pull myself to the edge of the cave. It proved to be a sort of airy chamber in the underside of a flying buttress, and it opened downward into empty space—it is more like a fire ceiling than like a fire cave. I ended up hanging in midair, a few feet below the charred ceiling, looking straight down to the stream. There was a faint sound of rushing water. I saw strands of computer cables emerging from the cave walls, where Sillett and his team had implanted electronic probes. I touched the wall of the cave. It was moist, and it had a yellowish color and a musty smell, and it felt like Stilton cheese.

Two hundred and fifty feet up, the crown of Adventure billowed into a riot of living branches. By this time, the ground had disappeared—it was hidden below decks of foliage in the lower parts of the redwood canopy—and the sky was invisible, screened by tents of foliage overhead. This was the deep canopy, a world between earth and air. Steve Sillett was nowhere to be seen.

I was now climbing fifteen feet above Marie Antoine. Even though we were still far below the top of Adventure, we were considerably higher than the top of the average tropical-rain-forest canopy. If the upper surface of the Amazonian canopy had existed here, it would have been a hundred feet below us. At this point, the main trunk of Adventure was seven feet in diameter. Now the huckleberry thickets began in earnest. The species was the evergreen huckleberry, a relative of the wild blueberry that grows in Maine. In November, in the California rain forest, the huckleberry leaves were tinged with scarlet at their edges. The bushes were all over the tree: perched on its branches, occupying its crotches, and popping out of the trunk. I wormed through them, following the black rope upward.

At two hundred and ninety feet, I encountered Sillett. He was sitting on a branch inside a spray of huckleberry bushes, and he had a thoughtful look on his face. The main trunk had split open near the branch where he sat, and the opening revealed dead and rotten wood inside the tree. “This beast is full of rot pockets,” he said. “These huckleberry bushes are putting their roots through the scars into rotten wood in the center of the tree. One summer, we had half the normal rainfall, but these bushes still put out a full crop of huckleberries. They’re getting their water from rotten wood inside the tree.” He pointed to something on the side of the tree. “Check out that little brown moss over there.”

“Which moss?”

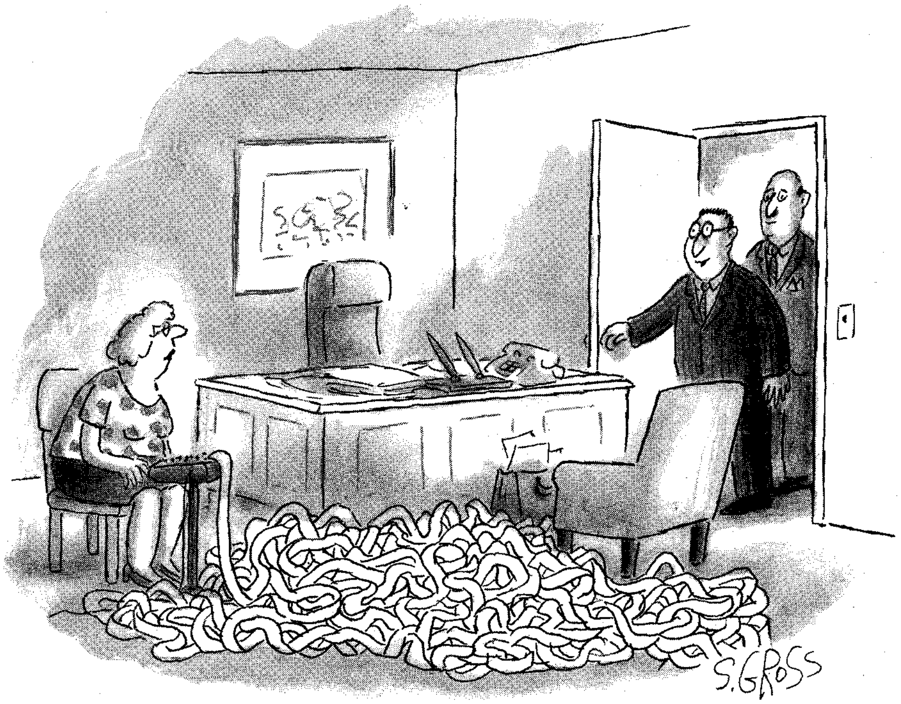
“The one that looks like it’s dead.”

I hung out over a branch and looked at the moss. It was a greasy-looking thatch growing below a wound at the base of a stob. Redwood sap had been dribbling over the moss.

“It’s called *Orthodontium gracile*,” he said. “It’s an extremely rare moss. It often lives below wounds in old-growth redwoods. It likes the resin. It’s nearly gone in Oregon. That’s because old-growth redwoods in Oregon have been slaughtered.”

I had reached the upper end of the black rope. Nearby, I saw the bottom end of a second climbing rope, a white one, which was hanging down along the trunk of the tree. It wandered upward and out of sight, toward the top of Adventure. Sillett suggested that I get on. I transferred my ascenders to the white rope, and climbed up it for about thirty feet, wriggling through a jungle gym of redwood branches and huckleberry shrubs. The bag that held my motion lanyard bumped along through the bushes. Then, abruptly, the crown thinned out, and a view opened across Adventure Valley.

The white rope came to an end about fifteen feet below the top of the tree. No



“That will be all, Mrs. Bernstein. During the break, we reached a verbal agreement.”

ropes led to the top. I took the motion lanyard out of my bag, attached it to my saddle with carabiners, and threw one end over a branch above me. I pulled it back to me, to form a noose over the branch, and clipped the noose to my saddle. Then I detached myself from the white rope.

There is something unnerving about leaving the main rope behind and going into free motion in the crown of a redwood tree. The main climbing rope is a lifeline that connects a climber to the ground, and it is the escape route out of the tree. Once you disconnect from the main rope, you are on your own. If you wander far from the main rope, you can end up moving through a maze of wood as tall as an office building by means of a short piece of rope, with no way to get down to the ground unless you can find the main rope again.

With my weight on the motion lanyard, I leaned back, until my body was horizontal and my feet were planted on the trunk, and I walked up the trunk of Adventure. I threw one end of my lanyard over a higher branch, clipped it back to my saddle, and pulled myself up. Suddenly, I hung near the top of the tree. At three hundred and twenty-eight feet, I found myself in the middle of a bush studded with huckleberries. I began eating them. They were tart and crunchy. The branches in the tree's top were festooned with beard lichens—they looked like the frizzy beards of dwarves. It was a sunny day, and a breeze was blowing, which stirred the lichen beards, and the air held a tang of the sea—the Pacific Ocean lay over a ridge to the west. Adventure rocked in the breeze, like a ship riding at anchor.

The uttermost top of Adventure is dead. It is a gray trunk, encrusted with lichens, which extends about six feet above the huckleberry bush, and ends at a sheared-off stump. Adventure used to be a taller tree. Its top fell off, probably in a storm, perhaps four hundred years ago, or roughly at the time that Shakespeare wrote "The Tempest." By then, it had already been growing for a thousand years, or maybe more like fifteen hundred years. ("Who the hell knows how old it is," Sillett said.)

The branches around me trembled. A lanyard flipped over a nearby branch, and Marie Antoine appeared. She trunk-walked up to a kind of platform of branches, and sat in the middle of them. "The top of this tree is just a big old juicy dead-wood pit," she said.

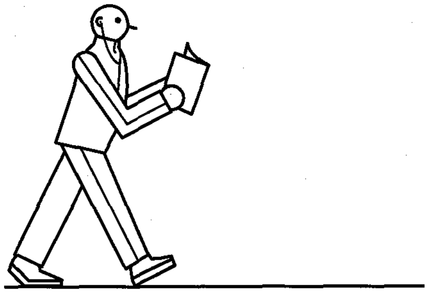
The dead trunk at the top of Adventure is a natural water tank, she explained. Rainwater collects in the broken stump at the top, and the water runs down inside Adventure, where it saturates the rotten wood like a sponge. A coast redwood tree seems to have the ability to send out roots from any part of its tissue, including its top. Adventure may be sending roots out of the living wood in its top, which run into the dead trunk, and feeding on the dead parts of itself.

The next day, in the afternoon, I sat down at the base of Adventure, while Sillett went aloft. He had been having trouble with a computer system that he had installed in Adventure, and he wanted to try to fix it. It was getting to be late, and it grew dark on the forest floor, but there was sunlight in the crown of Adventure. I called Sillett on the radio. "Where are you?"

"At the Upper Huckleberry Cave."

"Where's that?"

No answer. I put on my helmet and saddle, and began jugging up the black rope. I found him at two hundred and thirty feet, hanging from his motion lanyard inside a rampart of extra trunks, a long way from the main rope. I climbed up the main rope until I was fifteen feet above Sillett, and then I pulled out my lanyard, flipped one end of it over a branch, and clipped it back to my saddle. Then I released myself from the main rope and dangled on the lanyard. The trunk was a fissured wall going down into shadows. Suddenly, I was very aware that I was hanging more than twenty stories above the ground. I lengthened the noose, and dropped twenty-five feet, until I was hanging below Sillett. I kicked against the trunk, swung away from the tree, and then came back toward him. I grabbed the end of a rope that Sillett had left draped over a branch, and, using my ascenders, climbed up the rope at a diagonal to Sillett's location. When I got there, I anchored my motion lanyard over a branch, and I hung in the air next to him.



We were suspended below a cracked and decayed expanse of holes in the tree—the Upper Huckleberry Cave. Sillett was hanging in front of a fibreglass box. The box, which was attached to a branch, held a computer controller that gathered data from all the instruments that were installed in the tree. A laptop computer was sitting on top of the box, and he was staring at the screen.

He seemed exasperated. "Every time we climb Adventure, it kicks our butts," he said. "I think it's cursed." He fished a Leatherman tool out of a pouch and began tinkering with it inside the box. The sun had set behind a ridge, and an evening breeze had sprung up. The tree's branches and needles began to give off a hissing sound. "Do you feel that?" he said. "We're moving."

Adventure began to do something that felt like slow breathing. Each sway of the tree took several seconds to complete. The redwoods around Adventure were also tracing deep, slow sways, and their movements were independent of one another: they were going in different directions. The trees seemed intensely alive.

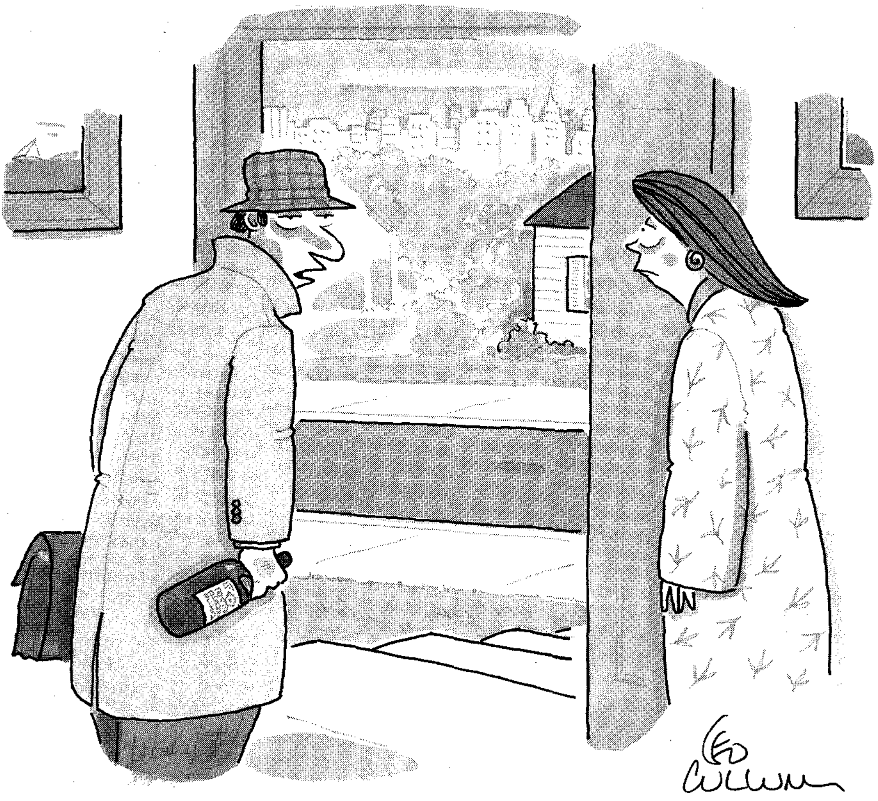
Sillett watched the motion of the redwoods in silence for a little while. "Despite the difficulty of doing science in these trees, there's always a moment during a climb when you can lose yourself," he went on. "You perceive time more clearly in redwoods. You see time's illusory qualities. When you get up into the crown of a redwood, you stop thinking about your life, you stop planning your future missions. You start feeling the limits of your perceptions of the world as a member of the human species. When you feel one of these trees moving, you get a sense of it as an individual."

"Do you really think of this tree as a kind of entity?" I asked.

"It's a being. It's a 'person,' from a plant's point of view. Plants are very different from animals, but they begin life with a sperm and an egg, the same way we do. This organism has stood on this spot for as many as two thousand years.

Trees can't move, so they have to figure out how to deal with all of the things that can come and hurt them. This tree has burned at least once. The fire must have continued inside some of these caves for a long time—the caves were smoldering orange holes in the tree for weeks. Redwoods don't care if they burn. After the fire, the tree went, 'Wooaah,' and it just grew back."

The wind died, and the forest became silent. A fluting call came from the air near us. Sillett looked around. "Maybe a Swainson's thrush." He poked with his Leatherman at the electronics. "A tree is not conscious, the way we are, but a tree has a perfect memory. If you injure a tree, its cambium—its living wood—will respond, and the tree will grow differently in response to the injury. The trunk of a tree continually records everything that happens to it. But these trees have no voice. My life's work is to speak for these trees." He paused. "Dude, it's getting dark. It's time to go down."



"It's Bring Your Personal Demons to Work Day."

• •

Three hundred and fifty-three feet above an alluvial flat in the Humboldt Redwoods State Park, near the top of a coast redwood named Idril, Steve Sillett and Marie Antoine were sitting side by side in the branches. I was attached to the tree with my motion lanyard, near them. My lanyard was anchored around the uttermost top of the tree. Idril is about eight inches thick at that point. The top of the tree is crowded with wires and instruments and a solar panel—Sillett's gadgetry. We were at the upper surface of the world's tallest forest canopy.

I tightened my lanyard, and inched myself up a little higher. The whole top swayed.

"Watch your foot," Sillett said. I had nearly kicked a bioprobe out of the bark.

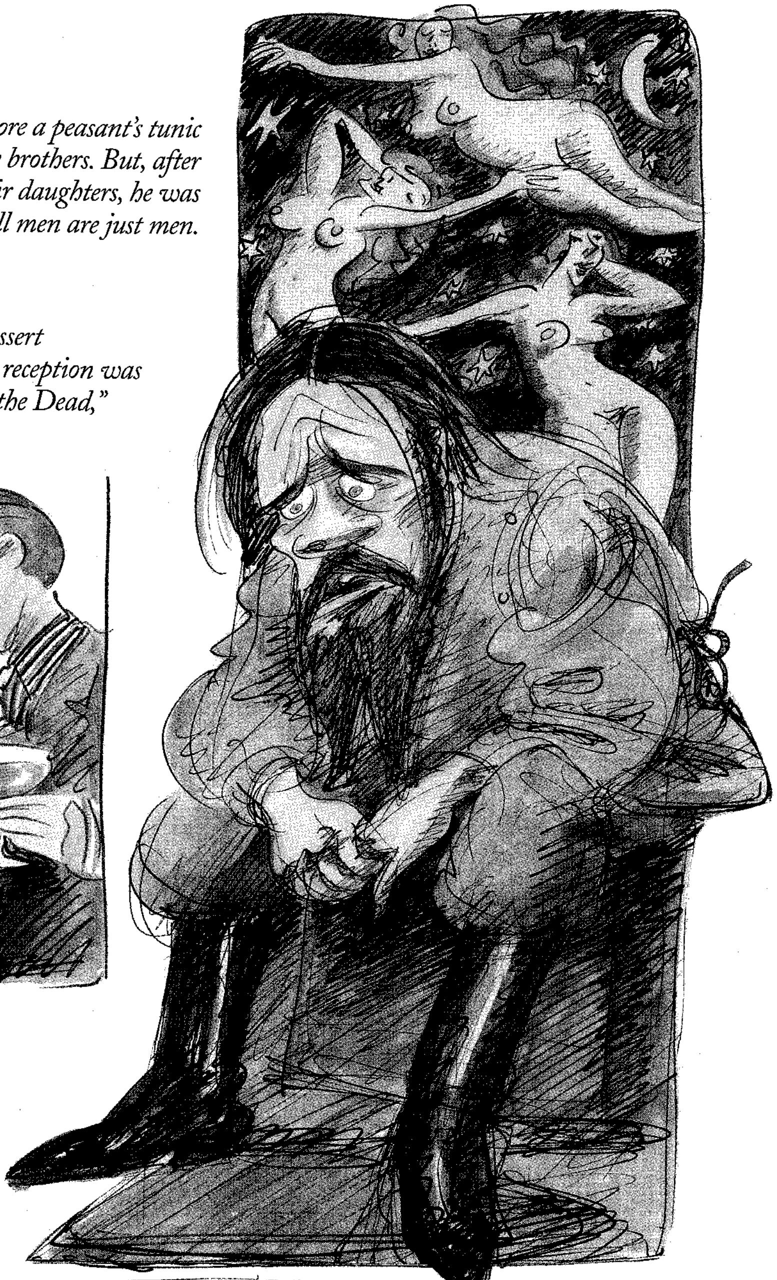
The upper surface of the canopy was a bubbly froth of redwood crowns, and each tree seemed to have a slightly different color of green. There were deep greens, gray-yellow greens, brown greens, deep-blue greens, and bluish grays. "It's because these trees have a huge amount of genetic variability," Antoine said. It began to rain, and the colors grew sharper. Here and there, skeletons of dead tops seemed to glow—these were redwoods entering middle age. "You can see the Stratosphere Giant," Sillett said, pointing to a green cloud that burst above the canopy to the east of Idril.

On July 30, 2000, an amateur redwood researcher named Chris K. Atkins was bushwhacking around in a little-visited stand of redwoods in the park, using a laser range finder to measure the heights of the trees. On that occasion, Atkins discovered what is currently believed to be the world's tallest tree. He named it the Stratosphere Giant. Sillett measures the Stratosphere Giant once a year, each September, when he climbs it with Marie Antoine, and they run a tape measure along the trunk. This past September, they found that the Stratosphere Giant was three hundred and seventy feet two inches tall. It is the only living tree that is known to have surpassed three hundred and seventy feet, and it is presently growing taller by about four inches a year. It is eighteen feet across at the base, and is around two thousand years old.

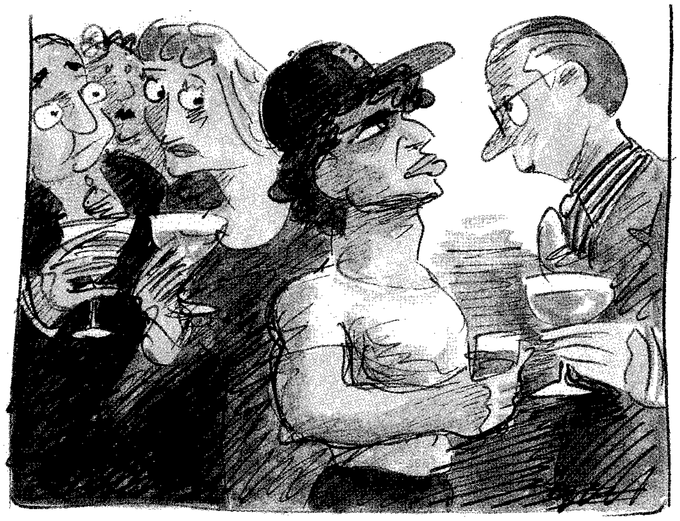
The rain became steady. We descended Idril in stages, one by one, rappelling down a rope. Partway down, we stopped in a cluster of branches, and we left the main rope and anchored off on our lanyards. With his lanyard anchored around a branch above him, Sillett stepped out onto a branch, lengthening the lanyard as he went. He was using the lanyard to maintain his balance and to prevent his full weight from pressing on the branch itself—this is called branch walking. Sillett walked lightly along the slender branch nearly to its tip. He looked almost weightless, and he leaned out and touched the branches of a neighboring redwood. "You could easily get into that tree from here," he said.

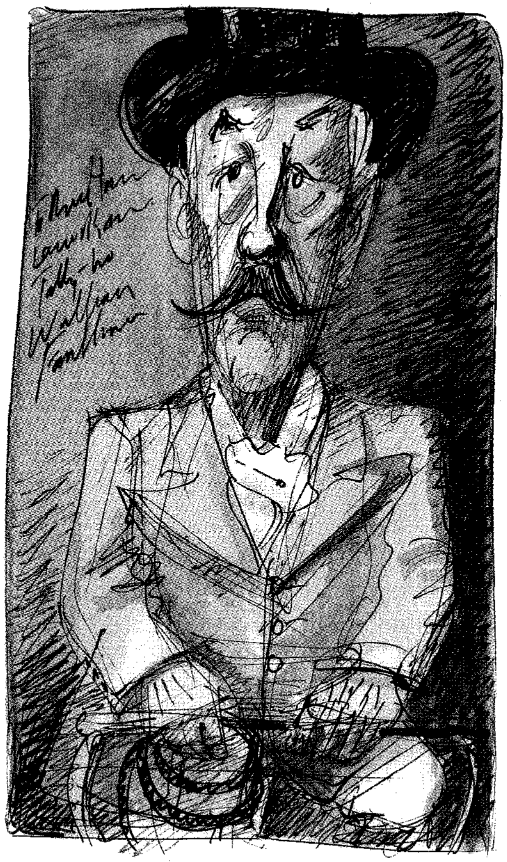
We were now at two hundred and fifty feet, near the bottom surface of the canopy in this grove. I clamped a descender to the black, main rope. I released my motion lanyard and tucked it away in its bag. With my weight now on the main rope, I released the descender brake and began to slide down. Then I kicked away from Idril as hard as I could. As I swung from the tree, I opened the brake on the descender full wide. The rope began to rush through the descender, and I fell out of the canopy on a fast rappel. Huge columns appeared, the trunks of trees that stand around Idril, and I floated weightless down through redwood space. ♦

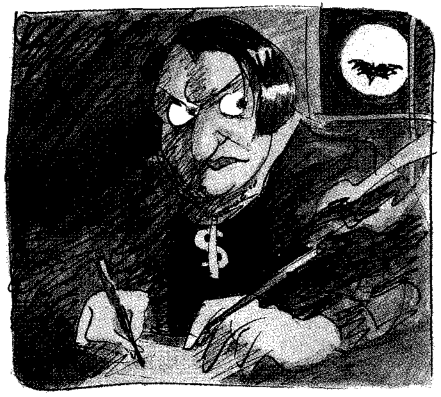
LEO TOLSTOY *wore a peasant's tunic to show his serfs that all men are brothers. But, after coupling with several of their daughters, he was forced to admit that all men are just men.*



NORMAN MAILER *has always used clothes to assert his macho individualism. In 1949, when an elegant reception was held to honor him as the author of "The Naked and the Dead," he arrived in T-shirt and baseball cap.*





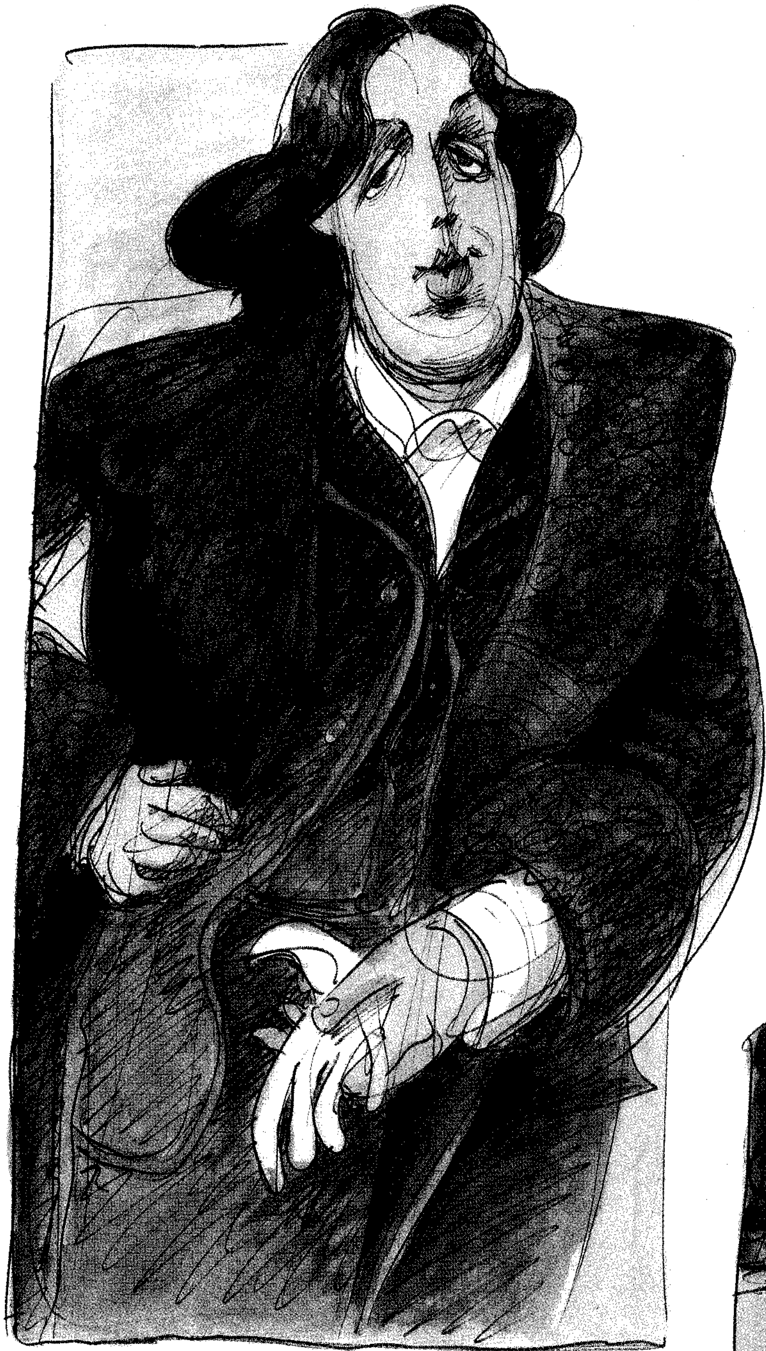


AYN RAND, *proud to show her love for the free-enterprise system, wore a huge dollar sign around her neck. This symbol, some believed, had the power to fend off vampires and liberals.*

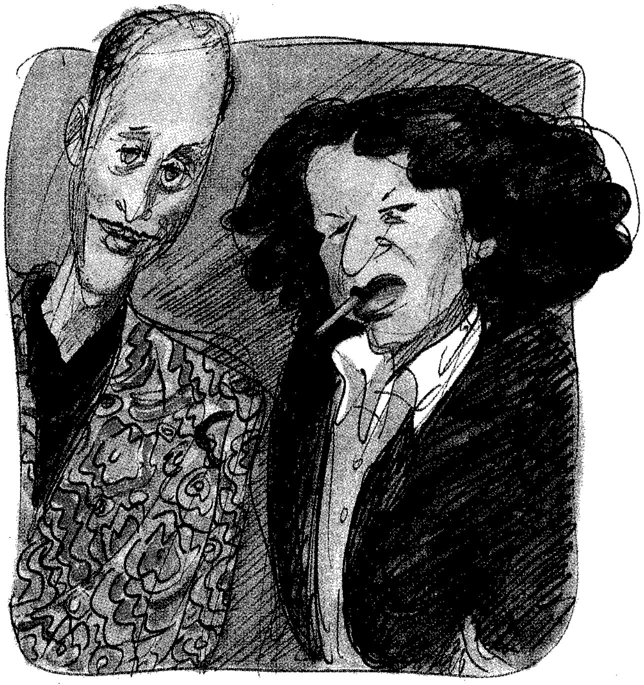
WILLIAM FAULKNER *was frightened of horses, but he loved dressing up for the hunt. When Random House asked the author for his photograph, he sent this one.*

LITERARY FASHION

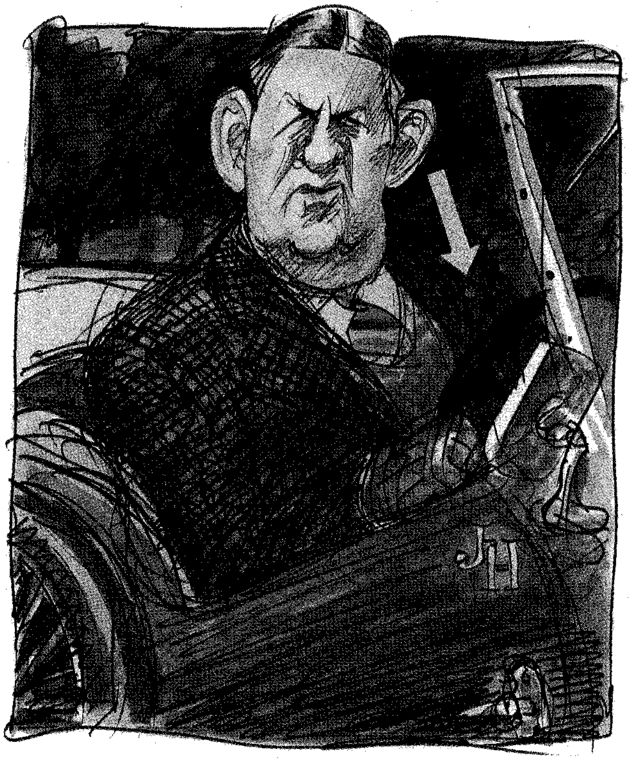
by Edward Sorel



OSCAR WILDE *arrived in America wearing this green, fur-trimmed coat. His comment that the sea was "not so majestic as I had expected" resulted in the headline "Mr. Wilde Disappointed with the Atlantic."*



FRAN LEBOWITZ *wears her trademark dark trouser suit, appropriate for a coiner of cynical aphorisms. ("My favorite animal is bacon.") She is seen here with the writer-director* **JOHN WATERS**, *whose jacket suggests a more cheerful view of life.*

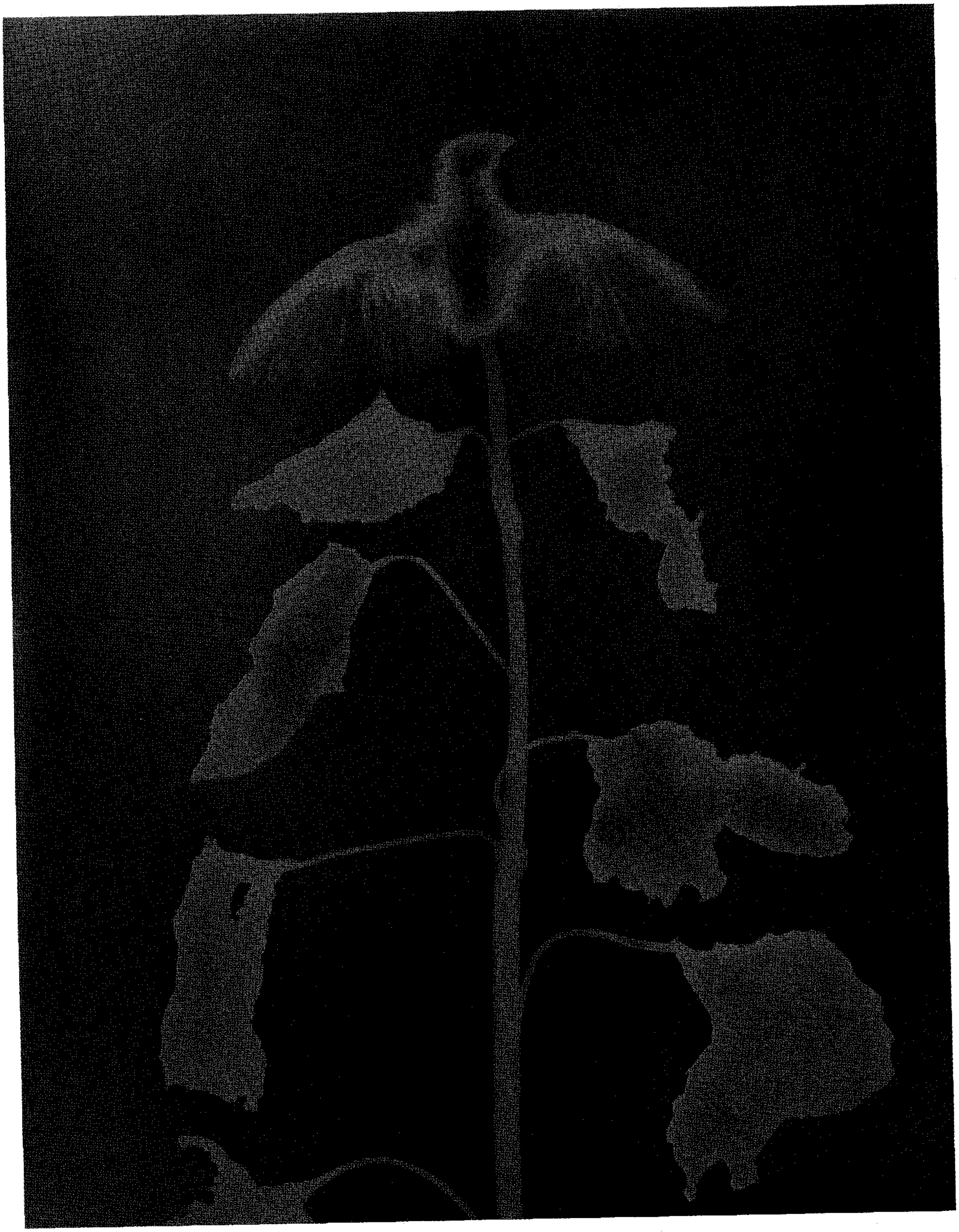


JOHN O'HARA *preferred tweeds with his monogrammed MG-TC and a three-piece suit with his Rolls-Royce. But, no matter what he wore, he seldom forgot to pin on his rosette from the National Institute of Arts and Letters.*

FICTION

UP NORTH

BY CHARLES D'AMBROSIO



We angled our heads back and opened our mouths like fledgling birds. Smoke gave the cool air a faintly burned flavor, an aftertaste of ash. A single flake lit on my wife's eyelash, a stellar crystal, cold and intricate. I blew a warm breath over her face, melting the snow.

"It's been falling since Saginaw," I said.

"Listen," she said.

The flight from New York had been rough, and my ears were still blocked, but somewhere in the distance, beyond the immediate silence of the falling snow and the thick woods, I heard the muffled echo of rifle shots.

"Deer season," Caroline said.

"Your father go out?"

"He usually goes," she said. "He and the boys. And now you. Now you'll be one of the boys."

Caroline brushed her hair free of a few tangles and clipped it back in a ponytail that made her look a decade younger—say, twenty years old, taking her back to a time before I'd met her. Perhaps in reflex I remembered the sensation I'd had the first night we slept together, thinking how beautiful she was, how from every angle and in every light she was flawless, like some kind of figurine. Now she examined herself in the small round mirror she'd pulled from her purse, grimacing. The shallow cup of the compact looked to be holding a kind of flesh dust, a spare skin. She dabbed powder around her cheeks, the set line of her jaw. She took a thick brush and stroked a line on either side of her face, magically lifting her cheekbones. She traced her lips lightly with a subdued shade of red and suddenly she was smiling.

"Up a ways there's a fork," she said. "You want to stay right."

Before I could start the car again, two men in orange caps crossed in front of us, rifles slung over their shoulders. They stopped in the road and waved, the ears beneath their caps like pink blossoms in the raw cold, and then they bumbled into the woods. I stared at their fresh footprints in the snow.

"You know them?" I asked.

"No," she said.

At the cabin, we ate a late lunch without the men, who were out on a mission that was, it seemed, top secret. Caroline's mother, Lucy, had been kept in the dark, and so had Sandy Rababy, whose husband, Steve, was a partner in the accounting firm founded by Caroline's father. We ate tuna sandwiches and potato chips on paper plates that had been gnawed by mice. Lucy set out a plastic tray of carrots and celery sticks and black olives. We drank mulled wine in Dixie cups, from which I nervously nibbled the wax coating.

"They took their guns and vests and packed peanut-butter sandwiches and a half gallon of Scotch," Sandy said. "Now, where do you think they're going?"

"We heard guns on the drive in," I said.

"Isn't it awful?" Lucy said.

"What's worse," Sandy said, "the toilet's busted."

"It froze," Lucy said, "and the bowl cracked. Or the pipes broke or something. We're using the outhouse."

She pointed, and through the window I saw a rickety, leaning structure, and a dirty trough of footprints in the snow where people had traipsed back and forth.

"You need to wear a fluorescent hat out there," Sandy said, "so you don't get shot trying to relieve yourself."

The cabin was open and cozy, a single large room with a high ceiling, and although I'd never been there before, it struck me as familiar. It was rustic and unpretentious, with that haphazardly curatorial décor that accumulates in old family haunts. At one end was a large fireplace constructed of smooth stones hauled up from the lakeshore, and at the other end were the log bunks where we'd all sleep. Everything that had ever happened here was, in a way, still happening: the smell of wet woollens steaming by the stove, of dry leather gathering dust, of iodine and burned logs and Coppertone—all of it lingered in the air. Two persistent grayling, long extinct in Michigan, surfaced in the wash of light above the back windows, and even the mounted deer and elk heads flanking the fireplace suggested souvenirs from some gone, legendary time. It was exactly the kind of abiding paradise people create for their kids just so that, long after the last summer, the past will live on.

"Caroline, you're quiet," Lucy said to her daughter, my wife, who sat with her legs crossed at the head of the table.

The minute we arrived, Caroline had gone directly to an old gouged dresser and, from the bottom drawer, pulled out a man's bulky knit sweater, which she wore now—it was green and motheaten and voluminous, belonging to her father, whose girth was still a ghostly, orotund presence in the stiff wool. As soon as she sank into the sweater, it was as if she were officially home, and no longer had to explain herself. She took a bite of her sandwich, and her silver earrings shivered against her neck, catching the light. They were a gift, I imagined, from S.J., the man whose initials now coded her journal and datebook. She bunched a sleeve of the sweater above her elbow, and said, "Tell me the news."

"You know Lindstrom's wife passed away?" Lucy said.

Caroline said, "Poor Lindy."

"He's very depressed, especially coming up here," Sandy said. "This is the first Thanksgiving without her."

I'd met Lindy and his wife, Beth Ann, on several occasions when the whole group had come to New York for a weekend of theatre. They, like Sandy and Steve Rababy, were lifelong friends of the Jansens. They'd all met in college, when the men were brothers at the Phi Delt fraternity in Ann Arbor, and now, years later, the group remained intact and inseparable except for this death.

"Hey, Daly, what about these lips?" Sandy said, sliding the torn page of a magazine toward me. She'd had cheek implants and was currently in the market for new lips. I was meant to offer a proxy opinion for all men. The woman in the magazine was pouting sadly or seductively, it was hard to tell, and she was looking confused or far off into the distance, also hard to tell.

"Those are Caroline's lips," I said.

Sandy held the page to her nose, and then looked at Caroline, who modelled a little moue.

"You're right, they are," Sandy said. "I want your lips."

"They're spoken for," my wife said, touching my knee under the table, quaintly.

Caroline heard the men come up the tote road around nine o'clock. I went outside and watched as her father horsed the truck over a hillock of

ADAM FUSS, "IN BETWEEN" (1994)/CHEIM & READ GALLERY

snow, rocking it back and forth and stubbornly and finally into the yard.

"Where's my little girl?" Robert Jansen said as soon as he saw me. His voice boomed, a deep bass that echoed away, bounding into the woods. He looked past me toward the lighted door of the cabin, where Caroline stood, her long blue shadow thrown on the snow.

"Hi, Daddy," she said.

"How'd it go?" Sandy shouted from the kitchen.

It was obvious as the men stood warming their hands at the fire that part of what had been top secret about their day involved a bar. Their cheeks flushed red and their eyes sparked wetly and none of them were able to stand perfectly still—they looked like a trio of overweight crooners, swaying boozily in the soft light for a last song.

Lucy rattled a plastic jar of aspirin and set it out on the table with a pitcher of ice water.

"So?" she said.

Lindy lifted a log into the fire, raking the bed of coals with an iron, and wiped his hands.

"No luck," Steve said.

"But you found the bar all right," Lucy said.

"Huh—yeah," Sandy said. "The bar wasn't running through the woods."

"Tomorrow," Mr. Jansen offered. He was a large man, so large he always struck me as unfinished, the rough framing of a man who would never fully occupy the space he'd annexed. He had a flat owlish face and arched gray eyebrows and a pounding, theatrical voice. It was he, more than anyone else, who had encouraged my wife in her acting career. "And Daly'll come along."

I knew better than to object, although I'd fired a gun only twice in my life, and both times I'd missed the can. There was no romance for me in weapons, and I found it effortful to be around men who liked to shoot. I always had, beginning with my father, who was an avid gun collector and fancied himself a marksman. In an act of adolescent defiance, I'd become an equally avid birder, a member of the local Audubon, and a preachy vegetarian, turning the table into a pulpit while my father, ignoring me, packed it away, head bent over his plate. Now I stared at the men, looking them in the eye, one by one—I had rehearsed this moment for weeks—but learned nothing when, to my surprise, each of them averted his eyes.

"How about fixing the damn toilet instead?" Sandy said.

"What's wrong with the outhouse?" her husband countered.

"The forest is full of drunks with guns," Sandy said. "Girls don't like that."

When I thought I was the only one awake, I reached for Caroline's thigh, sliding my hand inside her nightgown. In the cold cabin, she was like the discovery of buried warmth, of hibernating life. I heard the fire pop and hiss, the crumbling sound as the pile of logs collapsed and settled. Stirred by the noise, Lindy rose and stoked the fire, adding a few logs and some split cedar shakes. Steve snored loudly, and Sandy whispered something to him, and I heard them both grunt and turn over in bed. With the fire rekindled, a cobweb fluttered in the waves of rising heat, and the thin gray filament threw a shadow that wound and unwound, snaking along the far wall. I moved my hand up Caroline's thigh until I felt the rough edge of pubic hair curling out from beneath the elastic band of her G-string. I slipped a finger under the band, and then I reached for myself. Caroline rose up, startled, and said, "What, what," but I don't think she ever fully woke. She stared around herself, still safely in her dream, and then she lay back down, balling up beneath the comforter with her back to me.

My wife was raped the summer she turned eighteen. She told me this after we'd been together for a year, on a night when I'd once again caught her crying for no apparent reason. I felt instantly that I'd known all along. An entire history and sensibility suddenly pulled into focus, and there was Caroline, my wife, the blur of herself resolved into something sharp and clear. Our whole time together, I sensed that I had been tracing the contours of that moment, describing and defining its shape. This was, I thought, the elusive thing I'd been trying to put my hands on.

For months afterward, I found myself drifting away from conversations as I rehearsed the scenario in my mind. What I imagined was horrible for me—the rain and the bushes, a black man, a knife. I saw things. I saw the underpants she'd have to pull on again when he was done, I saw her walk home in a world suddenly gone strange, I saw the mud she'd have to wash off the backs of her thighs and the way the stream of gray would circle the drain, I saw pebbles embedded in her knees, I saw her days later, alone and crying, dropping the knife the first time she cut into a tomato, I saw the halved red fruit on the white cutting board the next morning, the spilled seeds now dried to the plastic. I saw these things, I

QUITTING TIME

The hosed-down chamfered concrete pleases him.
He'll wait a while before he kills the light
On the cleaned-up yard, its pails and farrowing crate,
And the cast-iron pump immobile as a herm
Upstanding elsewhere, in another time.
More and more this last look at the wet
Shine of the place is what means most to him—
And to repeat the phrase "My head is light,"
Because it often is as he reaches back
And switches off, a home-based man at home
In the end with little. Except this same
Night after nightness, redding up the work,
The song of a tubular-steel gate in the dark
As he pulls it to and starts his uphill trek.

—*Seamus Heaney*

imagined them. Our life together took on a second intention, and a sock on the floor would stop me cold. My eyes would lose focus and I'd daydream, trying to capture the moment and make it less strange, trying to inhabit the past, intervening. I wanted to be there, and, failing, I developed instead a tendency to ascribe every dip and depression to the rape, organizing our shared life around it, carrying it forward into our future like a germ.

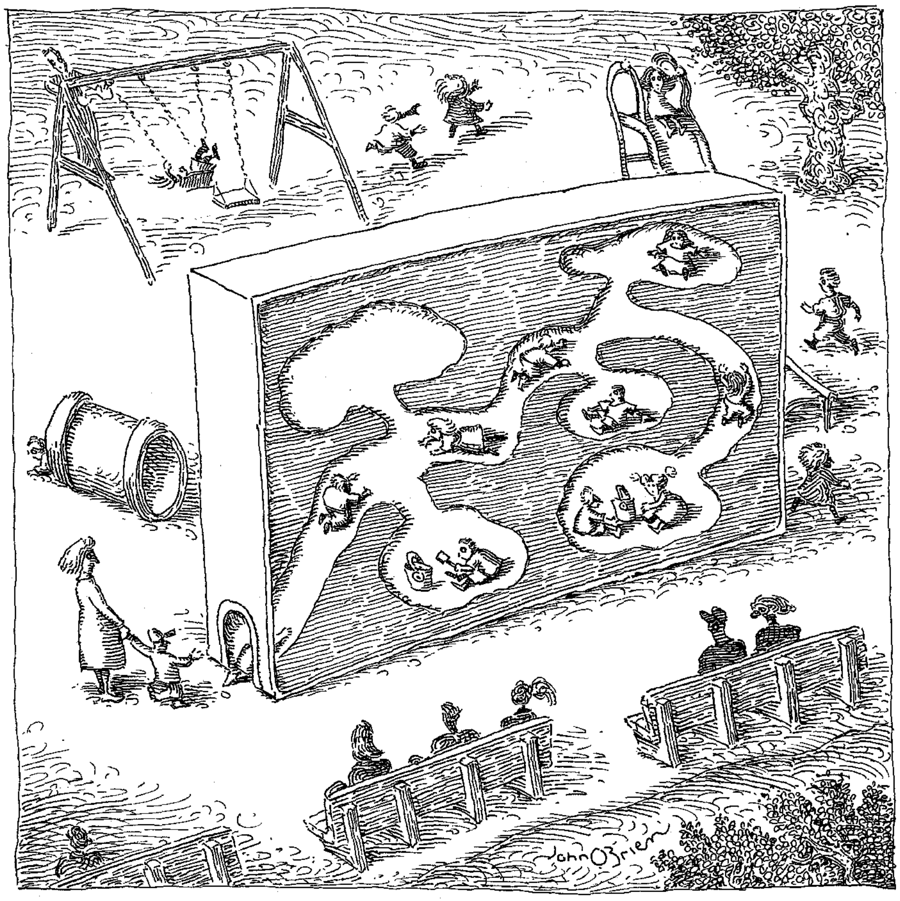
I now understand that rape is more often than not a domestic matter, but I was deeply confused when, after pressuring my wife relentlessly, she told me that the rapist was a close friend of her father's. I had staked all my understanding on increasingly elaborate and far-fetched horrors, but the dark stranger I had been improvising was a grotesque cliché. She had been raped here, in this cabin, on her annual trip up north. My desire to know more—I wanted his name, I wanted her to say it—was met with a steady resistance, an intricate system of refusals, with the result that, constantly sparring, skirmishing, denying, we were never very deeply honest with each other. Caroline was resolute. She wouldn't talk about it, except to say that the truth would kill her father. "He wouldn't be able to take it," she said. I had never been up north, refusing until now to make the annual trip.

This is not easy for me to say, so I'll start with the clinical by saying that Caroline was anorgasmic: she'd never had a climax, not with me or anyone else, not even by herself. Like many other men before me, I believed that I would remedy that problem, that it was merely a matter of prowess and patience, of a deeper love and a greater persistence, but no matter what we did—the books, the scents, the oils, all the hoodoo of love—none of it changed a thing. With time, my conceit broke down. In defeat I came to feel weak and ashamed. In some way, her lack of sexual fulfillment accounted for her promiscuity: what she missed in intensity she made up for in scope. She had never been a faithful lover, either before or after our marriage; she preferred sex with strangers, which I could never be, not again. It was as if she were determined to revisit, over and over, that original moment of absolute strangeness. And yet she continued to need the scrim of familiarity I offered, so that the world would fill more sharply with the unfamiliar. Daily I lost more and more of my status as a stranger, and our marriage was like a constant halving of the distance, without ever arriving at the moment in time where, utterly familiar, I'd vanish.

Caroline was currently having an affair with a talent agent, a man from London who, roughly a month ago, had begun to make regular appearances in her diary and datebook as S.J. In her Filofax: "Lunch w/ S.J." "S.J. for drinks." A page with his home number, then his address scribbled on the square for October 23rd. (Before S.J., there'd been an M., a D., a G. She always used initials, some nicety of convention she must have come across in adolescence.) I had, of course, taken to reading her journal, hoping it contained some sort of truth. I'd read the most recent entry as I read all of them, at three in the morning, crouched on the side of the tub in our tiny bathroom, in terror of being discovered, my skin blue and bloodless under the frank fluorescent light. In that entry she considers whether she should go with S.J., the week after Thanksgiving, to his house in Vermont, telling me—what, she wonders. That she's landed a part in a commercial shoot that will take her overnight to Boston? What part? And what commercial? she asks herself, plotting for the plausible, the approximate, some arrangement of words that would deceive and soothe and sound, recognizably, like our life.

The truck was loaded and we were off before dawn, while the women still slept. The sky was slate blue and brittle, and at one point I saw the green flare of a meteor burn out above a line of trees. It happened so fast that I doubted myself in the very moment of wonder, and, feeling sleepy and uncertain, decided not to mention it to anybody. I imagined that a kind of fraternal ridicule kept this group cohesive, and I didn't want to become the scapegoat who helped them bond.

Mr. Jansen stopped for coffee at a filling station, where trucks and cars idled in the raw air, their headlamps lighting the tiny lot. Hunters were already heading back to the city with their



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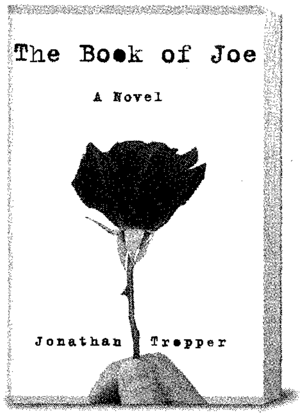

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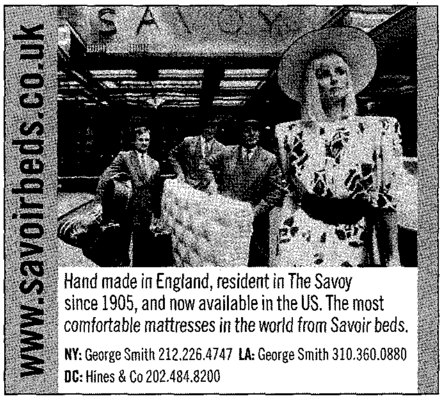
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kills. Nearly every car was tricked out with a carcass—a six-point buck strapped to the roof of a yellow Cadillac, the head of a doe lolling beneath the lid of a half-closed trunk.

Steve reached into his pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. He tapped a few loose and, turning to me, said, "Smoke?"

"Can't you wait?" Lindy said.

"I'll crack the window."

"Fuck, just wait."

"No, thanks," I said, waving away the offer.

Steve had been the first up that morning, and he'd taken the time to shave. His red jowly face was smooth and smelled of lime. Below his ear a spot of blood had dried where he'd nicked himself. I've never really liked men on whom I can smell cosmetic products, and it was that morning, in the truck, so close to Steve, that I realized it had nothing to do with the particular soap or aftershave but with the proximity. If I could smell a man, he was too close. Now Steve lit a cigarette and inhaled with a grimace, relishing the pain.

"How's things in insurance?" he asked.

"Good enough," I said.

"You're an adjuster, right? Claims?"

I nodded.

Mr. Jansen returned with the coffee. He poured a cup from the thermos, and we passed it around, heading up the highway.

We turned onto a narrow rutted road, which ended in a blinding expanse of white. A dirty beige Pontiac was parked next to a rotted fence—dark leaning posts from which coils of rusted barbed wire ran like cross-stitching through the quilted fields of snow. We got out of the truck.

"Hey, Tennessee," Mr. Jansen said.

The man in the car rolled down his window. A cigarette hung from his lip and toast crumbs flecked his beard. He had hard blue eyes and a red scar along the side of his nose. A little girl slept next to him, wrapped in a blanket.

"Boys," he said, with a faint nod. He gazed through the windshield, his eyes fixed on something distant and still. "Cleared off a patch in the snow and put down corn."

Steve reached for his wallet. It was fat with credit cards, and an accordion of brittle plastic held photos of his wife and two kids. He leaned through the window.

"C-note?" he said.

Tennessee nodded.

"That's a costly turkey," Steve said.

Tennessee swallowed. "You only get one, I guess it might be." He continued to stare through the windshield. He didn't seem unfriendly, just far away, preserving his distance, as if he weren't really a party to this. Next to him, his little girl turned in her sleep, and he adjusted the blanket over her bare legs.

Steve handed him the money. Tennessee put the folded bill in his shirt pocket without looking at it and slipped the car into gear, easing through the dry snow.

When he was gone, Steve said, "Hard-up fucking hillbilly."

Mr. Jansen was unracking the guns and gathering our packs. We wore bulky camouflage snowsuits, each the same pattern—dark branches on a white background. We had only three guns, and so I carried the decoy, a brown plastic hen with galvanized-steel legs. Thinking of Tennessee, I wondered if we were trespassing. I guessed that baiting was illegal but kept quiet. Despite myself, I was looking forward to the hunt, and I hurried along in step with the others, through the deep drifted snow until, at the edge of the field, we came to the blind.

"Jesus," Steve said, after we'd crowded in. He pulled out a monogrammed silver flask and poured us each a jigger of Scotch, as "an eyeopener," he said. He winked at me, and said, "Sitting all day in a blind with a bunch of liberals."

"I think you'll survive," Mr. Jansen told him.

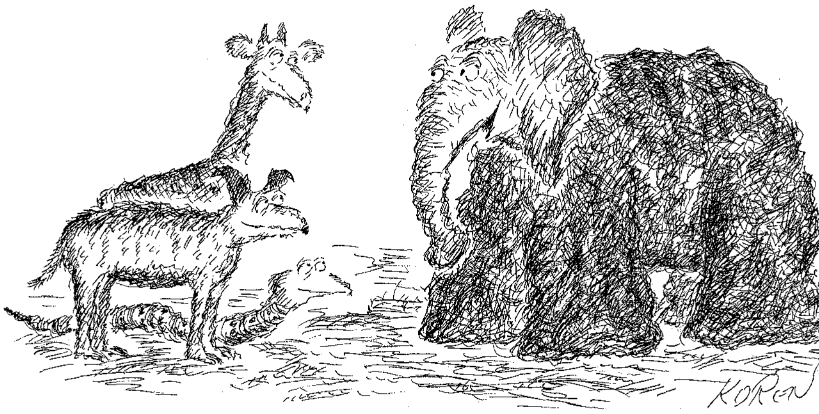
"If we got stuck here, I'd eat you. I'd have no problem with that."

The blind was a small dark hut with a flat tarpaper roof and a packed-dirt floor and two rectangular holes cut in the weathered boards. It sheltered us from the wind, and our huddled bodies seemed to warm it somewhat.

"Ben Franklin wanted the turkey for the national symbol," Lindy said.

"Smart birds, no doubt about that," Steve said. "Wily."

Mr. Jansen brought out the thermos of coffee.



"I like a relaxed fit."

• •

"How about a toast?" he said.

My own silence was making me increasingly self-conscious, and I felt an old inadequacy, not joining in on the banter.

"Whose property is this?" I asked.

"Some union big shot in Detroit," Mr. Jansen said. "Tennessee's the caretaker."

"You wouldn't think a couple of Democrats would go in for poaching," Steve said. "But I guess turkey hunts make for strange bedfellows. Like politics."

I couldn't follow the drift of his political beliefs, the precise arrangement of bigotries that he used to sort the world, but I raised my cup with everyone else.

Lindy said, "To a big fat tom."

The coffee and the Scotch parted ways immediately, one warming my stomach, the other rising in a vapor to my head.

"Daly," Mr. Jansen said, "why don't you set the decoy?"

"Sure," I said, glad for something to do, a small role.

Outside the blind, the snow spun like shifting sand. I planted the decoy off to the left of the corn, driving the steel legs into the frozen ground. I squinted across the white moving expanse, and my eyes ached. Everything was either black or white, flat or upright, reduced to the stark lines of winter. I couldn't believe this plastic turkey had a prayer, it looked so obviously counterfeit. I looked back to the blind, wondering if my snowsuit disguised me at this distance. Steve Rababy's head was squarely framed in the window. His face was round and ruddy, blown up in some beefy sated English way. In the asperity of early winter, he seemed grossly overfed.

"Who wants to call?" Lindy asked as I was crawling back in.

"More important," Steve said, "who gets first crack at him?"

"I thought we'd let Daly have the honor," Mr. Jansen said.

"I think we should draw lots," Steve said. "That's tradition."

Before I could say, "Leave me out of it," Mr. Jansen said, "O.K., choose a number between one and ten."

"Five," Lindy said.

"Three," Steve said.

I chose nine, and Mr. Jansen said, "Nine it is."

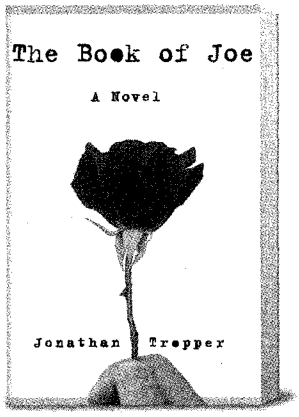
"Fuck you it's nine," Steve said.

Mr. Jansen laughed heartily, while Steve removed his mittens and worked the call, rubbing the wooden slat over the box. A dry squawking was carried downwind from the blind. He waited a short while and then, leaning one ear to the instrument, like a violinist, gave the call another grating, followed by a couple of percussive clucks. The call was faint, unequal to the wind, the gusting snow. It sounded lost and weak, too plaintive, and it was hard to imagine the sort of hunger that would mishear these false notes.

"With steel shot," Lindy said, "you've really got to call them in. Killing range isn't the same as lead."

"Use my gun," Steve said. He blew on his freckled red hands. "I've got some old lead shot in there. I packed a couple of those babies last night."

"I don't know about a 10-gauge,"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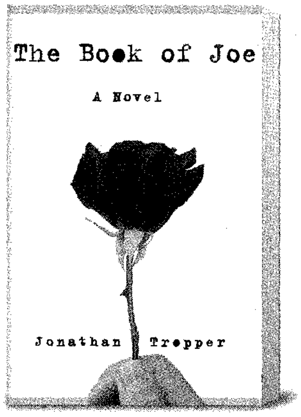

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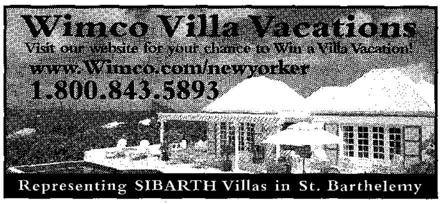

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Lindy said. "You get some extra distance, but you pay for it in recoil."

"I don't like to be undergunned," Steve said.

Lindy said, "Choke matters more."

"That's full," Steve said. "Pretty tight. The pattern density's fine at forty yards. I just tested it."

"What Steve's doing," Mr. Jansen explained, "he's trying to imitate a hen and draw a gobbler out of the trees. He'll keep calling until he gets an answer."

Steve said, "Right now I'm telling him there's a chance for poon out here, so he'd better get his ass out of the woods while the gettin's good." He looked away from his post to see if I was listening. "After we spot him—way out there on the edge of the field—I'll space out the calls. That's my style. I like to let the silence draw the bird in. Turkeys are skittish—they've got amazing hearing and eyesight—but they're curious, too, and that's their doom."

"Killing range is anywhere inside forty yards," Mr. Jansen continued, "but let's try to hold off until Steve gets him to more like twenty."

"You'll probably feel a little hot," Steve explained, "and your face'll flush. That's turkey fever. But just recognize it and relax and breathe deep and blow out and squeeze. You don't want to do what most guys do, you don't want to flock shoot. Aim—aim for the neck and head, not the turkey."

Mr. Jansen lit a cigarette. He said, "You want to kill it without pumping the meat full of lead."

Steve coaxed a steady confab of calls out of the box, playing the wooden tongue back and forth. To my ears, the sound remained ugly and discordant, certainly not musical and harmonious in the way of the passerine birds, like finches or warblers, with their contralto trilling in spring. Mr. Jansen seemed content to be out early, away from the women, with a drink in his hand and plenty more in the flask. Lindy was crouched in the corner, sunk into himself. He'd showed no real animation since we'd arrived.

"It wouldn't do to eat the national symbol," I said, trying to pick up the conversation where Lindy had left off. I felt instantly that I'd made an awkward, pointless comment. "Taboo," I added, trying to cover myself.

"Daly here is an R.C.," Mr. Jansen said.

"You eat your Saviour every Sunday," Steve said. "Isn't that what those crackers are?"

"Beth Ann was Catholic," Lindy said. He ran his finger in the dirt floor, drawing a cross. He pinched some of the dirt and threw it at the walls of the blind. "She wanted a Catholic funeral, and that's what she got."

Steve Rababy and Mr. Jansen averted their eyes, staring vacantly at different walls, as if trying to keep the separate lines of vision from tangling. Lindy looked at each of us, a soft well of tears pooling in his eyes. He rubbed a thick mitten across his face.

"I never converted," he said, in a very small voice. "At the funeral, it was like a foreign language. They were saying goodbye to my wife, using words I didn't understand."

"Get over it," Steve said. He had stopped working the call, but now he leaned out the window, scraping the wooden tongue over the box.

"That's a little cold," I said.

"Well," Steve said, "we've heard all this. We heard it yesterday and the day before and the day before that. We drove up goddam I-75 singing this song." He aimed a hard stare at Lindy. "It was almost a year ago. It's just sentimental bullshit at this point. It's fucking weak."

"Take it easy, Steve," Mr. Jansen said. He helped himself to another cup of hot coffee, cooling it with a measure of Scotch. "Everybody has their own time, Lindy most of all."

"She knew everything about me," Lindy continued, as if he hadn't heard Steve. "Everything." Tears streaked shamelessly down a face that crying contorted and turned ugly, a squalling baby's face that was not sympathetic in a grown man. "Now no one does."

"No one ever does," Steve said. "You know, here's your goddam marriage. All right? O.K.? Let me recap. For thirty-five fucking years I listened to you bitch and moan about Beth Ann. All right? Every afternoon at the bar, starting the day after you came back from your honeymoon. Five o'clock and I could fucking count on it. How she didn't give it up enough, how she wouldn't swallow, how she didn't look young anymore, blah blah

blah"—with each blah, he swiped a strident cluck from the call—"on and on and on. And now she's dead and it's like, mamma mia, she's some kind of fucking saint."

"Lucy knows everything about me," Mr. Jansen offered. It seemed a silly, conciliatory remark, not at all the kind of thing my wife's father believed.

Steve called him on it. "Yeah, right—I know more about you than she ever will."

Steve continued to scrape the call, but the wind had blown the horizon blank and there was no sign of a bird.

"And both of you know a fuck of a lot more about me than Sandy does," he said. "The way I see our marriage is, like, finally, after thirty-nine years, we understand we don't understand each other. We finally got that cleared up.

"Give me another drink," he said, beating senselessly on. "She could give a rat's ass about hunting—sitting out here in this box would seem stupid to her.

"Forget the turkey," he said. "I have a mind to shoot myself."

"Why don't you," I said.

Steve barked a frantic, nearly hysterical call, working the tongue rapidly, like honing a knife against a whetstone.

"You don't like me, do you? You got a problem with me."

"Jesus, how'd we end up here?" Mr. Jansen said. "Let's just everybody shut up for a minute."

Steve said, "There's key shit Sandy doesn't know and never will. Stuff about Katrina, and that whole saga, right?" He sniffed and spat through the window. "And yeah, every Friday about eleven, twelve o'clock you could always find Lindy's car parked outside the massage parlor on Warren. Those Oriental girls, they look like teen-agers until they're forty, eh Lindy? And you," he said, turning on my father-in-law. "You—"

"That's enough, Steve."

"Hey," Lindy said.

"And you," Steve said to me. "You obviously got some kind of fucked-up agenda—"

"Look," Lindy said.

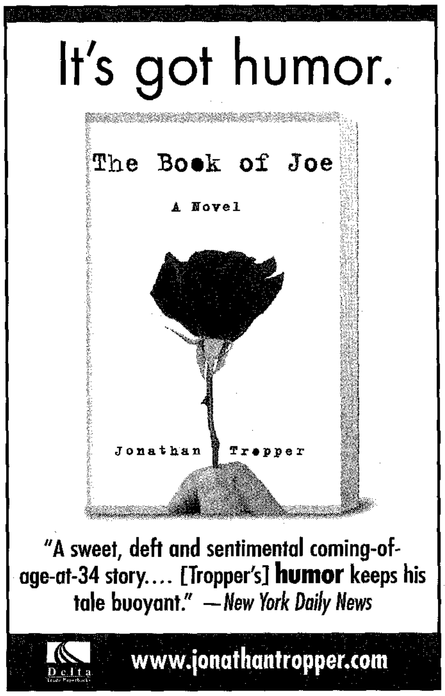
"Where?" Steve said.

Moving against a low sea current of snow, a turkey, its narrow neck bent, came toward us, following the call. Lindy grabbed a spotting scope from one of the packs, adjusting the focus. "It's got a beard and a half," he said, passing me the scope. I slipped off my mittens. Steve worked the wooden slat in a new rhythm, as if mating the tempo to his excitement, locating the music of his desire. I looked through the scope and saw the turkey, its long straggling beard and chocolate-brown feathers and beady black eyes, narrowed in a heavy-lidded squint against the blowing snow. I passed the scope to Mr. Jansen and he slid the gun into my hand.

We were all silent now, and even the smallest sounds—Lindy's labored breathing or Mr. Jansen absently rubbing his thigh—seemed a gross and fatal intrusion. Steve let the call fall silent for a moment, and then resumed, and when he did we could hear for the first time the low guttural of the old tom's response. The turkey drummed and strutted in what seemed to me like hesitation, and then, in a sudden dash, hurried straight toward the decoy.

The gun had a satisfying heft, a weight in my hand that was exactly right. I raised the stock to my shoulder and looked with one eye down the barrel, arranging the red wattle neatly within the notched iron sight. In this snow the dark-brown bird was exposed, and I had a vague sense of understanding the risk it took, the declaration it was making. The tom's beard blew in the wind, and he began to circle the hen, spreading his wings and fanning his tail. The bird puffed up to three times its size. It was a terrific display, cocky and proud and blustery and, I thought, soon to be irrelevant; my father-in-law gave a nod and I drew a breath and my mind went blank and I let go of the breath as I squeezed the trigger and nothing, nothing at all, happened. I went cold and, confused, stopped sighting the bird. Lindy said, "The fucking safety." He grabbed the gun, raised it to his shoulder, and fired. A deep blast echoed and unrolled, just as the tom seemed to know it had been fooled. Instantly, the fan of feathers folded and the turkey collapsed.

We rushed from the blind and gathered in a circle over the bird. The shot had been a good one; the turkey's head was gone, and its neck was now hardly more than a hose filling a hole in the snow with blood. No one bent to touch it, as if this were the scene of a crime



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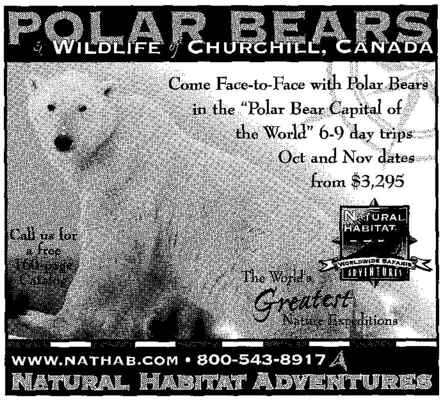

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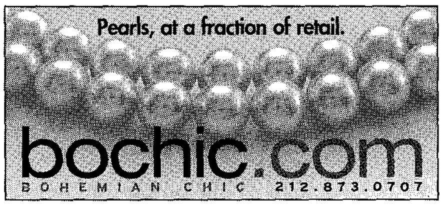

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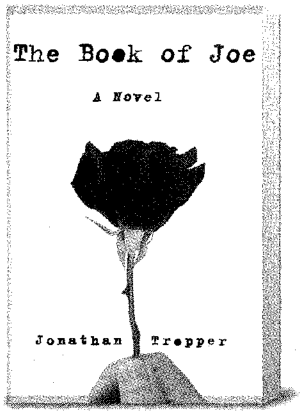

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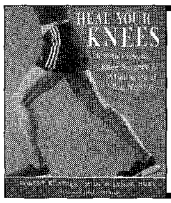

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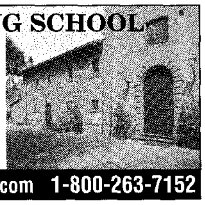


and we were waiting for some other, final authority to arrive. At last, Steve Rababy lit a cigarette and, covering his heart with his hat, gave the bird a brief eulogy.

"He was looking for pussy and now he's dead. Let that be a lesson to you liars."

Lindy offered a sentimental rephrasing, managing to work a trace of irony into his voice: "He died for love."

"Dinner," Mr. Jansen said, putting his vast appetite where it belonged, before all.

The shell had detonated inches from my ear. I worked a finger in it to clear the ringing.

Lindy said to me, "I had to take your shot."

"I didn't know about the safety," I said.

"That's my fault," Mr. Jansen said.

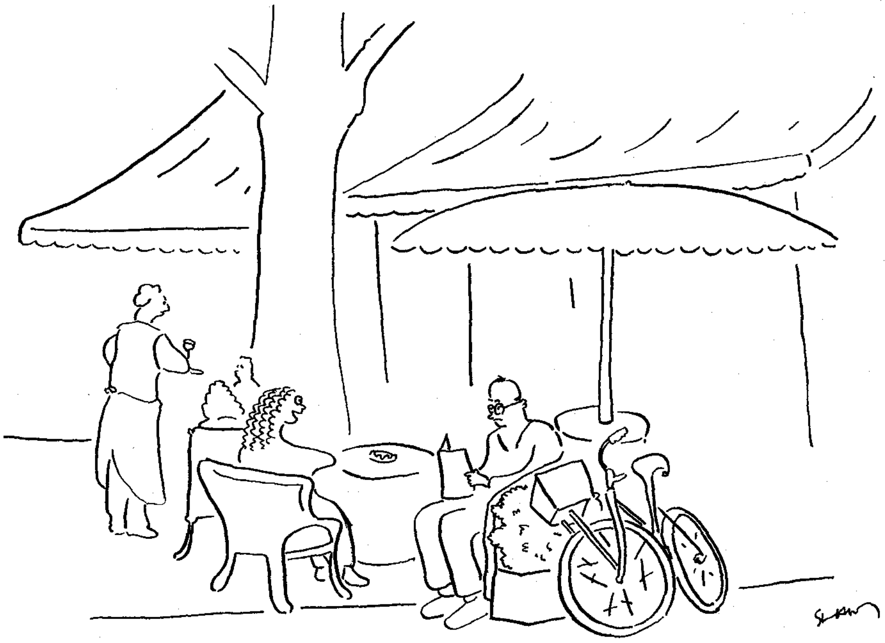
"Let's agree on a story," Steve said.

"Fine by me," Lindy said.

They looked at Mr. Jansen for ratification, and then he said, "O.K., we'll say it was Daly."

After the high of the hunt, the rest of the afternoon had the long, languid feel of a Sunday. People kept up a compensatory busyness. Mr. Jansen plucked the bird in the garage and brazed the remaining nubs with a blowtorch. He wore an orange watch cap with a comical fur ball dangling from a string, and drank steadily from a cache of beers he'd buried in a mound of snow. Sandy Rababy worked a wooden spoon in a big pink bowl, and Lindy sat on the couch reading the newspaper. Caroline and Lucy discussed acting careers, my wife's in particular, although now and then my mother-in-law offered an item of gossip she'd gleaned from the tabloids, re-stating fantasy and rumor as if they were fact. I listened, not so much to the content as to the lilt in my wife's voice, the English phrasing in some of her sentences, a strange cadence that rose up, seeming to free itself, now and then, from her flat Michigan accent. She had an actor's gift for mimicry, a hunger for imitation, absorbing the speech of others unselfconsciously, and on several occasions in the past her affairs had chillingly registered for me first in a new sound, a surprising word in her vocabulary, a foreign inflection in her voice.

Late in the afternoon, in guest mode, with no specific chore, I went for a walk. The trail I took led through a stand of white pine, ending at the lake behind the Jansens' cabin. A diving raft was beached on the icy shore, and a string of rental boats was chained to a tree, each boat filled with snow, its gunwales whelmed by deep drifts. I felt as though I were seeing a sculptor's rendition of my wife's memories, a summer dream hacked into ice. The lake was fairly large, the surface sealed shut as though paraffin had been



"We'll always hate Paris."

poured over it. I walked to the end of the dock. Below the ice, a blue sand pail and a yellow shovel from summer had sunk into the murk. Then I saw my wife out on the lake, perhaps half a mile from the dock, bundled in a shapeless red snowsuit. Her progress over the ice was painfully slow, as though she feared falling through, but then she was gone, and I heard a loon and tilted my good ear toward its call. Their cries make a haunting music on summer evenings, a tremolo you hear in the dark—eerie, because the two alternating notes mimic the sound of an echo, a call going out and then returning unanswered, a prayerful lament without a response. It was very late in the season to be migrating. The black bird was standing on the ice. Loons are ungainly, barely able to walk, achieving flight only after a long awkward struggle. In the air, they're graceful and capable of flying sixty miles an hour. I watched until the bird rose up and the black speck, clearing the trees, dissolved like a drop of tint in the darkening sky.

Trussed and displayed, our bird seemed to have been sitting on the table for ages, waiting for a banquet to begin. On either side of it, tall white candles flickered in a crosscurrent of the cabin's many drafts, sending uncertain shadows over the table and lending a layer of depth to the setting. McIntosh apples were mounded in a bowl lined with yellow and brown satin leaves, and a wicker cornucopia at the opposite end of the table had been filled with Indian corn, as well as acorns and walnuts and filberts, gourds, sprigs of dried sweet william, figs, a pomegranate—the open mouth of it overflowing with the stuff of harvest. A basket of warm, glazed buns was wrapped in a white cloth, and a rich, earthy stuffing, steaming like a bog, was kept hot in a glass-lidded serving dish. China and silver settings had been brought north from Detroit, and there were goblets for both wine and water. With the pipes broken, water was the scarcer commodity. But there was wine. Two bottles had been uncorked and were breathing on the table, and six more sat on a sideboard, above which, on the wall, a large ornately framed mirror, slightly canted, held the whole scene like a still-life.

Mr. Jansen poured wine for everyone, and then, as people settled into their seats, stood at the head of the table, flipping open the brass latches of a wooden box and pulling his carving knife and fork from a bed of red crushed velvet. He scraped the knife against a hone, crossing them above his head like a swashbuckler, and then, asking for silence, cleanly cut a first slice of white meat and placed it ceremoniously on my plate. The others clapped and cheered and stomped their feet, and I felt that my face must have reddened. I looked into the mirror and was able to see, as if I were hovering above the table, everyone but myself.

"To Daly, after all these years," Lucy said.

"Here, here," Steve and Lindy and Mr. Jansen all said together.

The toast's concluding ring of crystal rang dully in my right ear, still numb from the shotgun blast. We all drank in my honor, and then drank again when Steve, winking my way, rose to salute the turkey I'd shot.

"I'm surprised," Caroline said. "It doesn't seem like you, Daly."

A gravy boat came down the line, and I ladled a thick, brown, floury paste over everything.

"Yeah," Lucy said.

"Well . . ." I didn't know what to say.

Mr. Jansen jumped in. "Why not, Lucille? What, may I ask, is your idea of him?"

"I don't know."

Sandy answered. "More passive—not more passive, like, more a pacifist, I mean, a pacifist, not a killer."

"Oh, no," Lindy said. "Not the killer conversation again."

"Hunting," Steve said, cluing me in, somewhat vaguely, as he had with his politics. His assumption that we shared something unspoken only sharpened my resentment of him.

"You eat, you can't complain," Mr. Jansen said.

"But it's true," my wife said. "He's a major bird-watcher. He keeps this stupid little book—I'm sorry, I don't mean stupid. I mean . . . you know what I mean." She paused, patting my forearm, and then, covering the awkward silence, continued. "You should have seen how excited he was the day he saw a pileated woodpecker in Central Park."

"I'll show you a pileated woodpecker," Steve said.

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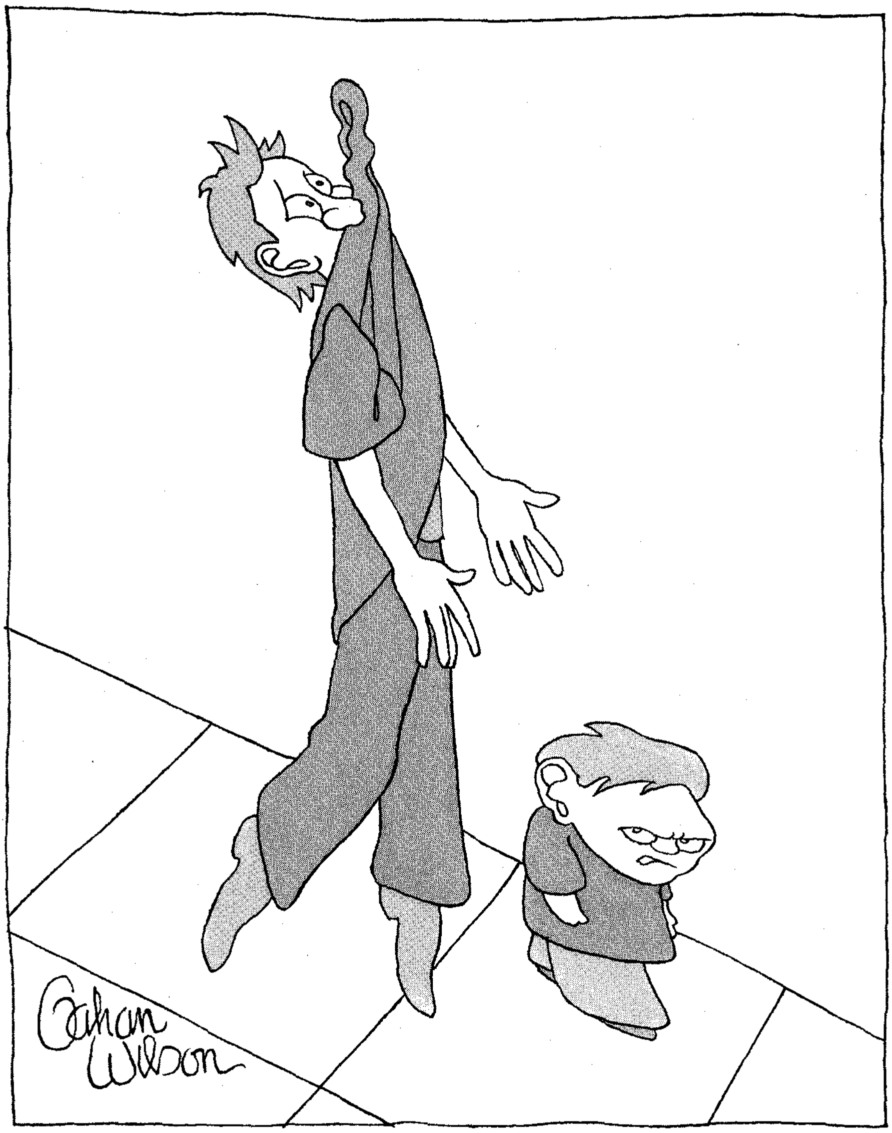


"My imaginary friend doesn't like you to talk to me like that, Dad."

• •

"Oh, God, not that pecker conversation again," Sandy yelled.

"What's the point of that, anyway, Daly?" Mr. Jansen asked, steering the conversation off the subject of sex. For a pleasure-loving, hard-drinking barfly, my wife's father was surprisingly prudish. His face was flushed. He'd tucked a corner of his napkin into his shirtfront, like a little boy. He swivelled his head from side to side as the discussion jumped around, slashing his knife and fork in the air, as if he were trying to stab a word out of the conversation and eat it. "And what's a pileated? That needs to be cleared up."

"What's the point of what?" I asked stiffly. I was seated at the far end of the table, with everyone to my right, and I couldn't keep pace with the conversation. I was beginning to think my eardrum was punctured. A warm fluid seemed to be leaking from it.

"Watching birds."

Between the sound of his booming voice and my comprehension, there was a distracting lag, and the only replies I could make were serious and plodding, out of synch with the rising hilarity.

"A pileum. It's the top of a bird's head."

"Don't all birds have tops to their heads?"

"Some birds are topless," Lindy said.

All this badinage was just crashing and piling up in front of me. It seemed really cornball and canned, but I couldn't quite catch the tone and join in. I reached for my water and held the glass in my palm, cool against my skin.

"Come again," I said.

"What?" Lindy said. "Huh?"

"What—" I began, and then everyone at the table started in.

"What? What?"

"What? What? What?"

"What?"

"I'm sorry," I said. "I can't hear."

"Ah," Steve said, "from the shotgun."

"Just in my right," I said.

Before I could refuse, Steve was standing beside me with his plate and utensils in hand.

"Trade places," he said.

"That's O.K."

"No, come on. You still got one good ear, right? Let's switch. It's no problem."

Stubbornly insisting on my seat would only have caused a scene at this point.

"Maybe he doesn't want to hear," Lindy said.

Sandy laughed. "Lord knows, he's better off."

"Switch over," Mr. Jansen said with a preëmptive wave of his knife.

By the time I was seated again, the entire conversation had moved on. Caroline was playing with her food, and I wondered what she was thinking. The silver earrings S.J. had given her caught the firelight and flickered as she brought her hand to her lips. Something dropped on her plate, tinging loudly enough for all of us to hear.

Her mother said, "I got one, too."

"Lead?" Mr. Jansen asked.

"Me, too. That's lead?" Sandy turned to her husband. "Isn't lead illegal? That's what you told me."

"Baiting turkey itself is illegal," Steve said. "So whether or not we used a little lead didn't seem to matter much."

Sandy looked at me, and I made an exaggerated shrug, absolving myself of any accessory role in the crime.

"There's nothing really wrong with it," Steve said.

"Except it causes brain damage," Lucy said.

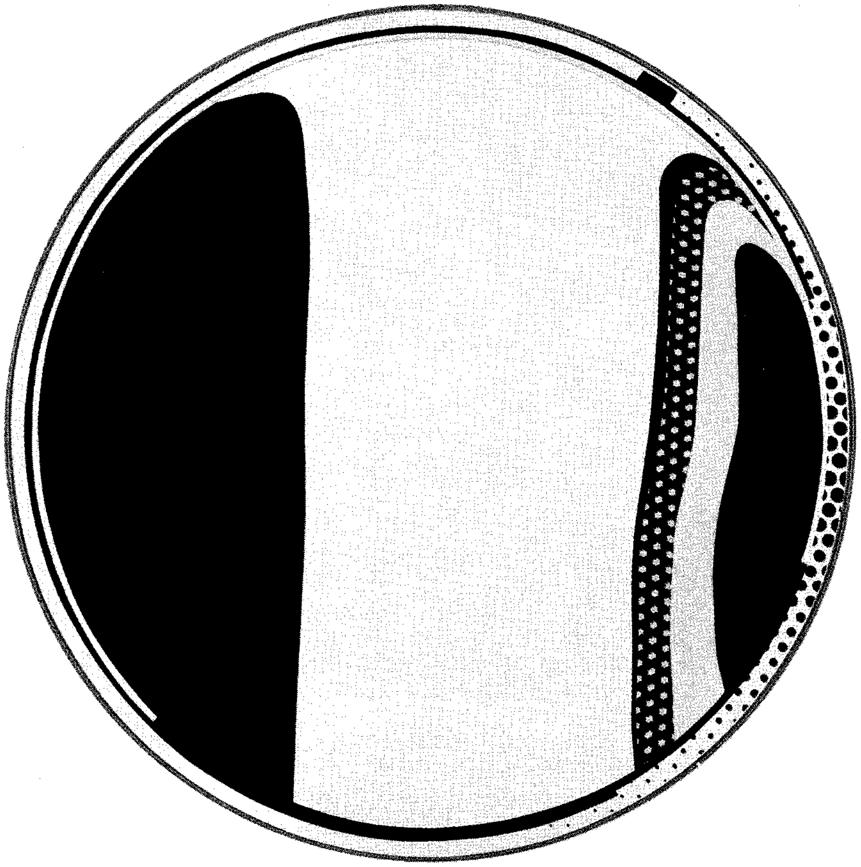
"Well, don't swallow any," Steve said.

Lucy said, "But won't it taint the meat around it, too?"

Sandy said, "The whole bird is poisoned!"

"God damn," Steve said.

"I don't like being reminded of this



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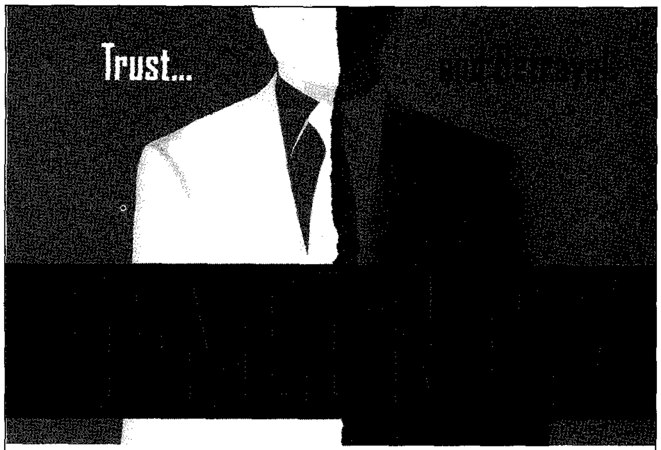

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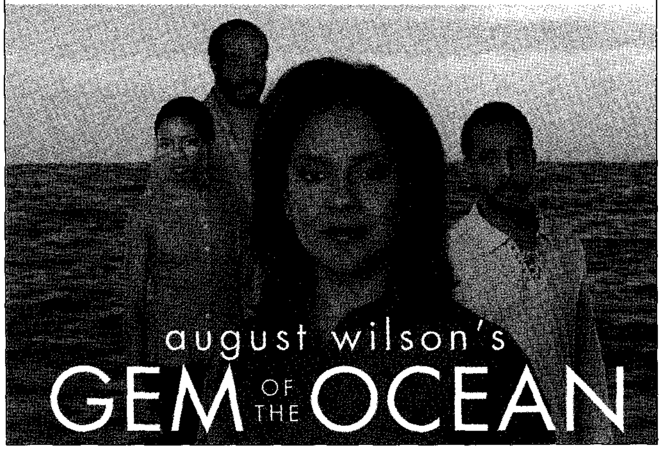

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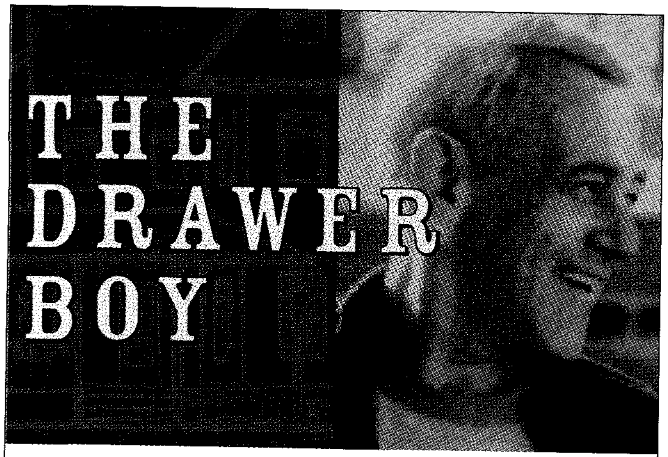

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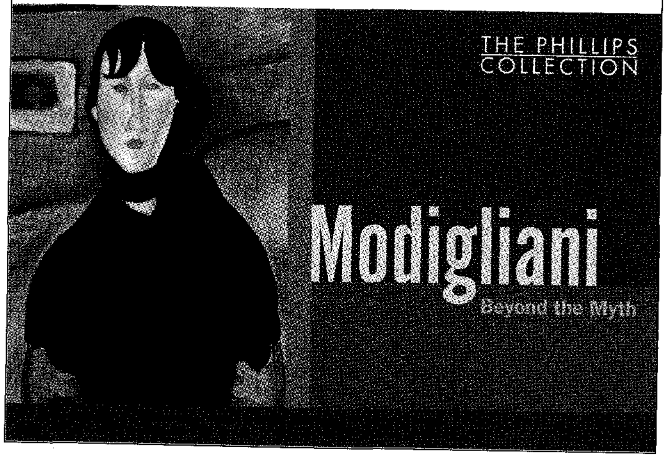

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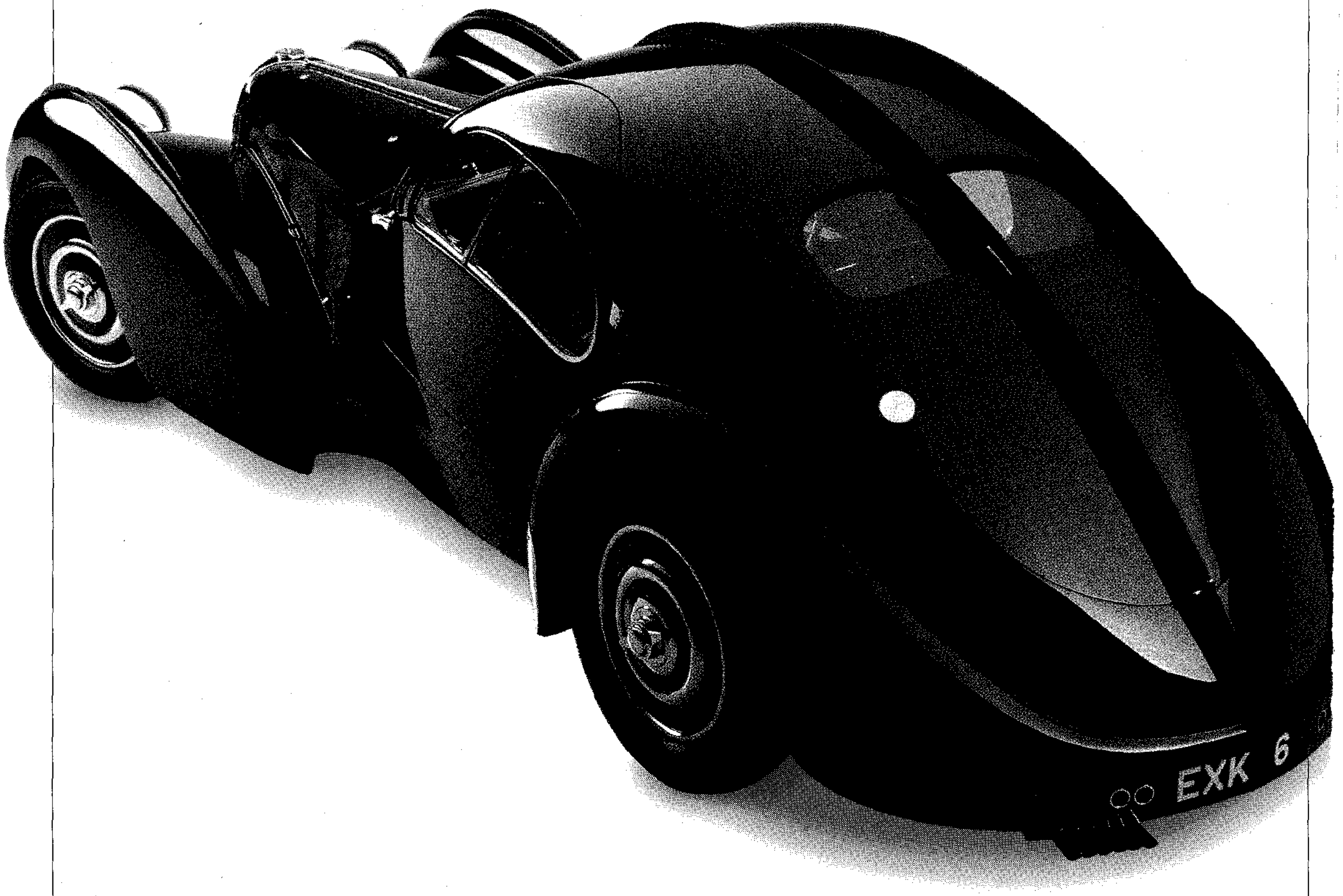

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dead thing that was alive," Sandy said. "That's my other point. I for sure don't like during dinner biting into the bullets that killed it."

"Those aren't bullets, for fuck's sake," her husband said. "It's just shot, No. 6 shot."

Sandy said, "I like to make believe my turkey was grown on a tree or bush."

"Yeah, well, it wasn't," Mr. Jansen said.

"You liked that fancy squab in Paris plenty," Steve said to his wife, working the hypocrisy angle that always seemed to crop up at the end of these discussions. It was as if the interminable debate—men on one side, women on the other—would end only when it swallowed its own tail.

"You owed me that squab," Sandy said. She was drunker than the rest of us, or less capable of hiding it. "You owed me that squab for fucking Katrina."

"Sandy," my wife's mother said.

"Ten years. Ten goddam years."

Sandy reached for one of the bottles of wine that had been left to breathe on the sideboard. She rose from her chair and said, "You all just go out and hunt and sit around and swap stories. You all think it's funny." She walked unsteadily around the table. "And no one's ever hurt and it's all just stories. Ha ha. Oh, yeah." She bent as if to kiss her husband on the ear. "I hate guns," she said. "I hate guns. I hate guns." She straightened up and looked over the table as if waiting for applause, and when none came she filled her glass, and then poured the rest of the bottle of wine over her husband's head. His knife and fork were poised above his plate, and he smiled patiently as the wine dripped down his face. When the bottle was empty, he put a piece of meat in his mouth and chewed it slowly, then swallowed.

No one said anything.

"I could tell some stories," Sandy said.

"We can clean up tomorrow," Lucy said.

"There's others," Sandy said.

Lucy insisted. "It's bedtime for you."

Sandy put on a red union suit and climbed the ladder into her bunk, and we tried to resume dinner, but soon she was leaning over the edge of the bed, shouting down at us.

"That's the difference," she said.

"Go to bed, dear," Steve said.

"I want to tell you the difference!"

"O.K.," Steve said. "What's the difference?"

"You all have stories," Sandy said. "And we have secrets."

"Good night," Mr. Jansen said.

"That's the difference," she said.

Before bed, I walked across the Jansens' drive and stood under the awning of the garage. It was snowing lightly. Firelight lit the cabin windows, and I could see my wife, standing at the kitchen sink, framed in an oval of frost where the glass was too warm to freeze. I fumbled with a book of matches as I watched her, this lovely woman carved like a cameo against the window. I was about to head back inside when Mr. Jansen joined me.

"You want a light?" he asked, and suddenly the flame from a lighter flared in my face. He lit a cigarette and said, "What's your problem with Steve?"

My father-in-law's face was gray with stubble, as if the long day had aged him. He looked tired and uncertain, and I wondered how he'd react if he knew the truth about his friends. This old man could be shattered with a sentence, but in the blind I had begun to lose my grip on the clarity of my dreams. I could no longer imagine the shape of my revenge, the loss I was trying to recoup, the pain I was trying to stop—Caroline's, or mine. I had been jarred by the end of dinner, sad for Steve, which surprised me, and sad for Sandy—especially Sandy, the way she lived with the rankling knowledge that she existed in her husband's affections as a thin anecdote, an illustration of his mediocre griefs. I didn't want to become the sort of man Steve was, and I honestly believed at that moment, as I watched the snow curl around the cabin windows, that I would never tell my wife's story, that her secret was safe with me.

Mr. Jansen watched his daughter in the window, her face blurring behind a cloud of steam as she poured boiled water into the sink and began washing the dinner dishes.

"It's a tough haul, acting," he said. "But she's good, isn't she?"

"Better than you know," I said.

"I wouldn't be so sure. I used to do some acting. That's where her talent comes from. Someday she'll be famous. She'll be well known."

"You're drunk," I said.

For a moment, he seemed to vacate his own face, leaving behind the hollowed eyes and nose and mouth of a mask. He

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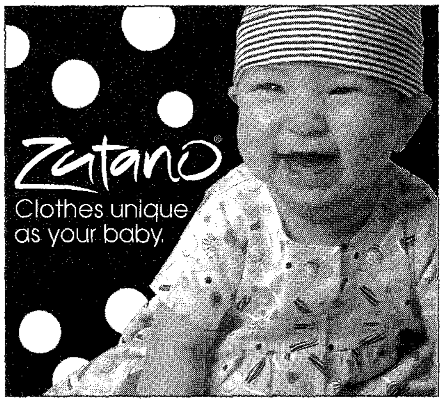
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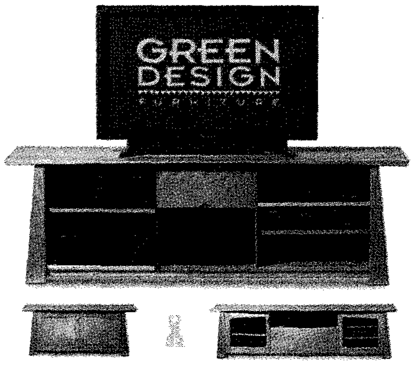

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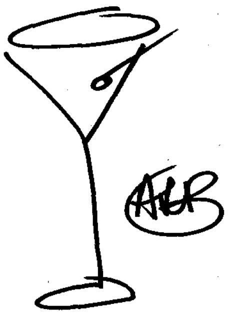

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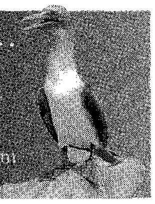

stubbed his smoke in the snow and stumbled across the icy drive back to the cabin. A little while later, I came in, climbing the ladder to our bunk. I lay awake, listening to the subdued voices below. I remember only that my wife used the word "wanker," and then for a while low whispers were skimming the surface of my sleep until, late in the night, toward dawn, really, I woke and found myself alone. My heart was racing, pounding with a familiar fear—that Caroline was gone and I would never find her. I hurried down the ladder and opened the cabin door.

The temperature had dropped and the snow had glazed over with a sheen of ice. The thin crust cracked underfoot with a distinct breaking sound. I walked along the trampled path, shortening my stride to fit my feet into the frozen mold of previous footprints, losing myself in concentration. At the outhouse, I stood for a moment, listening.

I called her name.

There was no response, and I panicked, as you might in a dream where all your assumptions are not exactly wrong but irrelevant. Far off in the woods, a coyote yipped and howled, and others answered. I leaned my head back and watched the breath stream from my mouth and disappear. The bare winter branches of the alders tangled above my head like a web. Then some black thing raced into the trees in front of me, and I jumped. It crashed through the underbrush and was gone.

The ground was pocked with fallen leaves and pine needles. Bare grass showed in the small circles of warmth beneath the sagging branches of fir trees. Everything that had moved in the woods over the past few days had left a record of its passing; the snow was marked with the tracks of hunters and birds and squirrels and deer and dogs, all the trails crisscrossing and weaving and intersecting, so that, if time were collapsed, you could imagine nothing but hapless collisions, a kind of antic vaudeville.

Caroline opened the outhouse door. She wore only her nightgown. Her feet were bare.

"You must be cold."

"Not really," she said. "I mean, I am, but I'm going in."

We looked back through the woods to the cabin. A rope of gray smoke curled up through the chimney, rising, it struck me, out of my simplistic imagination.

"You didn't shoot that turkey," she said.

"How do you know?"

She smiled and shook her head. "It's just not you."

"I guess," I said, although I resented the comment, the assumed familiarity. "I'd like to leave early tomorrow."

"I'm already packed," she said. "I've got a big week coming up."

I held my breath and waited for the scripted words.

"I got a part," she said. "A detergent commercial, Monday. We're shooting in Boston."

She was a good liar. She knew to look me directly in the eye. You can no more make someone tell the truth than you can force someone to love you. So that she wouldn't have to pretend anymore, I nodded, releasing her gaze.

"Who did?" she asked.

"Did what?"

"Shoot the turkey."

"Lindy," I said.

"I'm freezing," she said. "I'm going in now."

I grabbed her by the shoulder, turning her toward me. She tried to shrug free, and I dug my fingers into her shoulders, tightening my grip until I felt bone roll beneath my thumbs. Her teeth were chattering, and she bit a crease of white in her lower lip, trying to stop them. She was trembling, and her frailty in the cold enraged me. I pulled her in close and then abruptly pushed her away, shaking and shoving until she fell back, breaking through the crust of ice the way children do, making angels. The deep powder closed over her face and her mouth was stopped with snow, and she lay still, her dark eyes staring vacantly up. She tried to rise, flailing her arms, and then, dreamily, she stretched out her hand, reaching for mine.

I walked away, now trembling myself, but for some reason I turned, and when I did she called my name. I didn't answer. She was standing by the outhouse, sunk to her knees in the broken drift, her hands clasping her shoulders so that she seemed to be embracing herself. Wind separated the ragged wisp of smoke from the chimney into several twining strands. Her long blond hair held the moonlight. Her nightgown billowed out, fluttering behind her, and she appeared to be hovering, almost drifting, as through water. ♦

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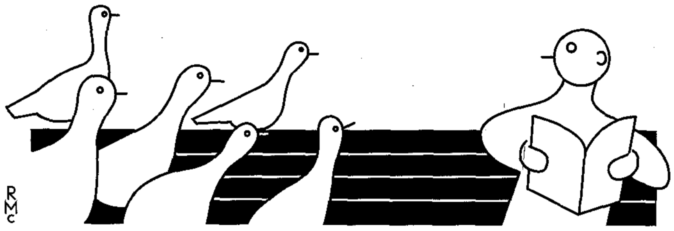


BOOKS

BECOMING THE EMPEROR

How Marguerite Yourcenar reinvented the past.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

In 1981, six years before her death, Marguerite Yourcenar became the first woman ever inducted into the Académie Française, and that weighty honor has been hanging around the neck of her reputation ever since. Every book jacket, every review, speaks of it. But that wasn't all that set her apart from other mid-century writers. She was an extremely isolated artist. A Frenchwoman, she spent most of her adult life in the United States, on Mount Desert Island, off the coast of Maine, where, to isolate her further, she lived with a woman. Her background, too, made her seem different. She came from the minor nobility and didn't hide it. Most of the people who knew her, even friends, addressed her not as Marguerite but as Madame. Add to that the fact that she wrote not in English but in her native French, and in a style that was often magisterial, in an old-fashioned, classical way. (People compared her to Racine. This was at a time when we were getting Bellow and Roth.) Add, moreover, that though she was a novelist, she was not primarily a realist, that she never mastered dialogue, that her books were ruminative, philosophical. Add, finally, that her greatest novel, "Memoirs of Hadrian" (1951)—which Farrar, Straus & Giroux will reissue this spring as part of its new FSG Classics series—was a fictionalized autobiography of a Roman emperor, and it comes as no surprise that nearly every essay on Yourcenar speaks of her work as "marmoreal" or "lapidary."

Actually, some of Yourcenar's prose is marmoreal, but not so that you can't get through it. Also, it is beautiful. What made her remarkable, however, was not so much her style as the quality of her mind. Loftiness served her well as an artist: she was able to dispense love and justice, heat and cold in equal parts. Above all, her high sense of herself gave her the strength to take on a great topic: time. Time was an obsession with her immediate predecessors in European fiction, but whereas those novelists showed us modern people altered—made thoughtful, made tragic—by time's erasures, she erased the erasures, took us back to Rome in the second century or, in her other famous novel, "The Abyss" (1968), to Flanders in the sixteenth century, and with an almost eerie accuracy. Yourcenar regarded the average historical novel as "merely a more or less successful costume ball." Truly to recapture an earlier time, she said, required years of research, together with a mystical act of identification. She performed both, and wrought a kind of trans-historical miracle. If you want to know what "ancient Roman" really means, in terms of war and religion and love and parties, read "Memoirs of Hadrian."

This doesn't mean that Yourcenar, in her novels, conquered the problem of time. All she overcame was the idea that this was the special burden of the modern period. Human beings didn't become history-haunted after the First World War, Yourcenar says. They were always that way.

The child of a Belgian mother, Fernande de Cartier de Marchienne, and a French father, Michel-René Cleenewerck de Crayencour, Yourcenar was born in Brussels in June of 1903. Years later, she reconstructed the events of that morning. "The pretty room," she said, "looked like the scene of a crime." Michel was screaming at the doctor, calling him a butcher. The housemaids hurried about, gathering up the bloodied sheets and also the afterbirth, which they took down to the kitchen and stuffed into the coal fire. (Yourcenar has a kind of mania for anti-sentimentality. It is hard to imagine another writer describing the burning of her own afterbirth.) Ten days later, Fernande was dead. The new baby lay squalling in a silk-lined crib.

Michel gathered up the child and returned to his family estate, near Lille, where Yourcenar lived until the age of nine, in what she later described as considerable happiness. She recalled the riot of poppies in spring. She remembered her pets: a lamb, a goat whose horns her father had painted gold. According to Josyane Savigneau, the excellent, hard-nosed biographer from whom I have taken much of this information, Yourcenar later scandalized some of her French readers by claiming that she never regretted not having a mother. She had a good substitute, a young nursemaid, Barbe, who adored her. But one day when Marguerite was seven it was discovered that Barbe, on a few occasions, had taken her to "houses of assignation," where she went now and then to supplement her income. Barbe was instantly dismissed; she wasn't even allowed to say goodbye to Marguerite.

After that, the child grew up fast. When she was nine, Michel sold the château, and the two of them moved to Paris. A man of leisure, an occupation that he took seriously, Michel wasn't home much, but neither was Marguerite. She was out scouring the city: the museums, the streets, the bookstalls. Like most girls of her social class, she never went to school. She had a few tutors, but mostly she educated herself. She taught herself Latin, ancient

RAPHO

Yourcenar in 1986. Her "Memoirs of Hadrian" takes us deep into the pre-Christian mind. Photograph by Édouard Boubat.

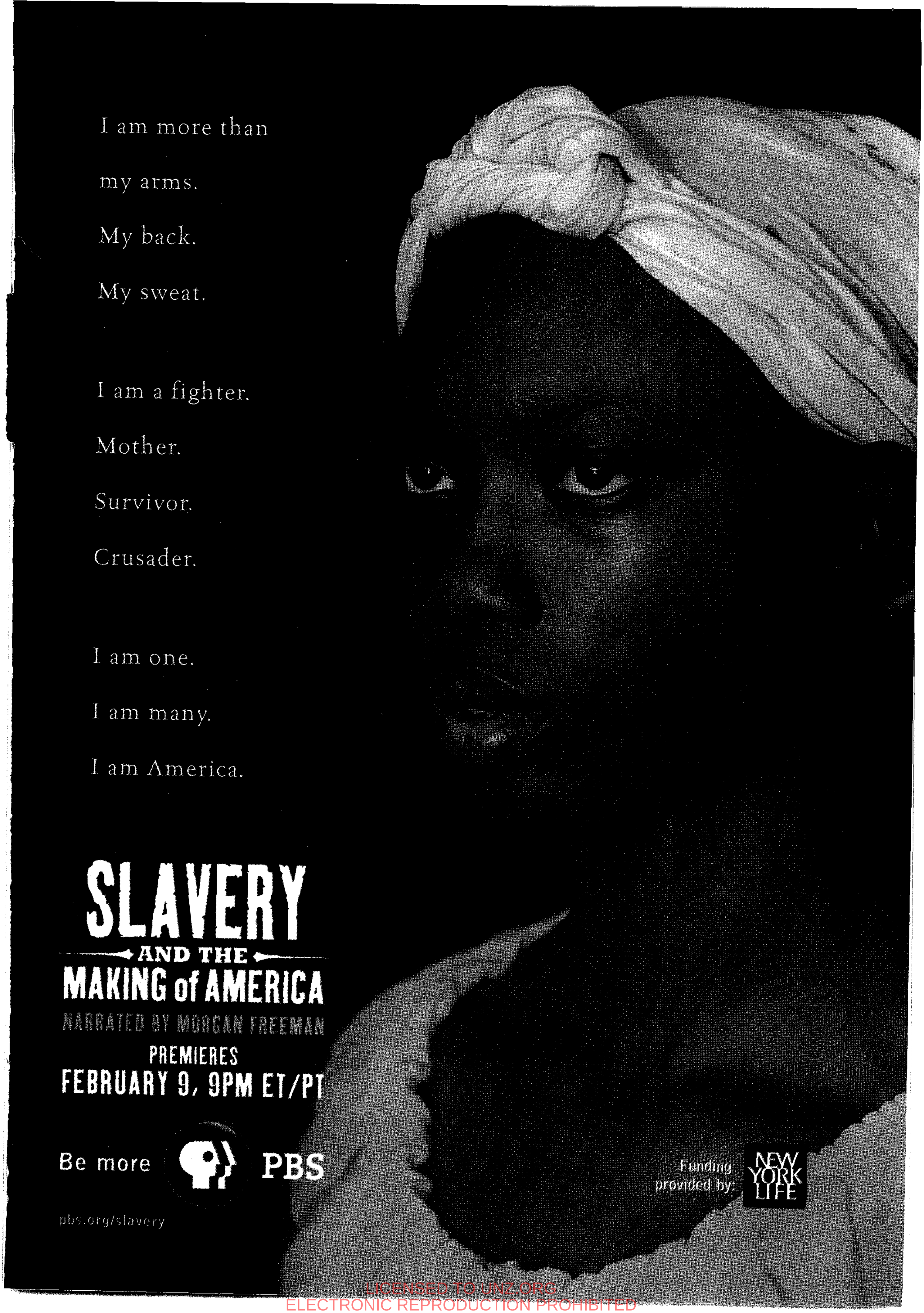
Greek, English, and Italian; she read everything she could find. Soon she began writing, and she expected a great literary career. "O, winds!" she called out, in a poem she wrote in her teens. "Carry me away to the fiercest heights, / To the loftiest summits of triumph to come!" With such a future awaiting her, she embraced any new adventure. At the age of eleven, she had what seems to have been her first serious sexual encounter, with a young woman. Afterward, the woman said to her that she had heard it was bad to do these things. Yourcenar's biography of her family finishes the story: " 'Really?' I replied. And . . . I stretched out on the edge of the bed and fell asleep." This was soon followed by an equally unfraught encounter with an older man, a cousin. Early initiation, she wrote, "can be a way to save some time."

Always given to understatement, Yourcenar later played down the affection between herself and her father. ("No doubt there was a strong attachment, as there is when one is raising a puppy.") But Michel clearly loved her, the more, no doubt, since she was his only relative who had not loudly deplored the fact that he was gambling away the family fortune. They eventually moved to the South of France and, in 1920, settled in Monte Carlo, where Michel could be closer to the baccarat tables. There, in the words of the Yourcenar scholar Joan E. Howard, the two became "partners in crime." They read aloud together, passing the book back and forth: Homer (in Greek), Virgil (in Latin), Ibsen, Nietzsche, Saint-Simon, Tolstoy. In his early years, Michel had tried his hand at literature: some verse, the beginnings of a novel. Now, as he watched Marguerite doing the same—by her early twenties, she was writing all the time—he urged her on. One happy night, they worked out a nom de plume for her, an approximate anagram of Crayencour. Then he wrote to publishers, under her new name, to peddle her writings. He paid for the publication of her first two books (both poetry). He also gave her the first chapter of his abandoned novel and told her to rework it and publish it as her own, which she did. Entitled "The First Evening," it is the story of a joyless wedding night, and the couple in question may have been based on Michel and Fernande. This was a very intimate and unconventional collaboration. In 1929, shortly before Yourcenar's first novel was published, Michel died. She was twenty-five. She said she cried and then almost forgot him for thirty years. He left her next to nothing—he was bankrupt by 1925—but she had a small legacy from her mother that she figured would give her ten years of freedom if she spent it carefully.

She passed those years partly in what she called "dissipation"—that is, a little drinking and a lot of sex, some with men, mostly with women. The rest of the time she wrote. In her old age, she said that everything she ever produced was already fixed in her mind by the time she was twenty. In any case, she now laid down her method. First, many of her narratives were set in the past. Second, they often involved towering passions compacted into tight, steel-band forms. That's the reason for the comparison to Racine, but a closer reference point is Gide, whose austere *récits* influenced almost every writer of her generation. She continued to embrace anti-sentimentality; indeed, she showed a fondness for brutality. And those traits, together with her highly controlled prose, encouraged reviewers to say—as they would say throughout her life—that she wrote like a man. As one critic put it, he could not find in her work "those often charming weaknesses . . . by which one identifies a feminine pen. The hand does not yield, it does not caress the paper; it is clasped by an iron gauntlet." This opinion was fortified by the fact that most of her protagonists were men. Curiously, however, they tended to be homosexual men. Yourcenar, it has been claimed, also had the habit of falling in love with homosexual men, the most serious case being her editor at Éditions Grasset, André Fraigneau, who had great interest in her artistically and none whatsoever sexually. This injustice drove her wild throughout her early thirties. She got two books out of it.

"If you kick her with the left spur, she'll give you more lumbar support."

Then, one afternoon in 1937, when she was thirty-three, she was sitting in a hotel bar in Paris talking with a friend about Coleridge when a woman from another table came over and told them they were all wrong about Coleridge. The woman was Grace Frick, an American English professor, almost exactly Yourcenar's age. The next morning, Frick invited Yourcenar to come up and see the pretty birds outside her hotel-room window. Later that year, Yourcenar sailed to the United States to spend the winter in New Haven with Frick, who was starting a dissertation at Yale. In the spring, she returned to France with a decision to make. She was still in love with Fraigneau; meanwhile, Frick was madly in love with her, and it was nice, finally, to be the loved one. She sat down and wrote a savage little novel, "Coup de Grâce," about a group of young people involved in the civil war in the Baltics after the Russian Revolution. At the center of the book is a love triangle. The narrator, Erick, an elegant Prussian fighting on the side of the White Russians—and a dead ringer for Fraigneau—is in love with his co-adjutant, Conrad; Conrad's sister, Sophie, is in love with Erick, and throws herself at him every chance she gets. (At



I am more than
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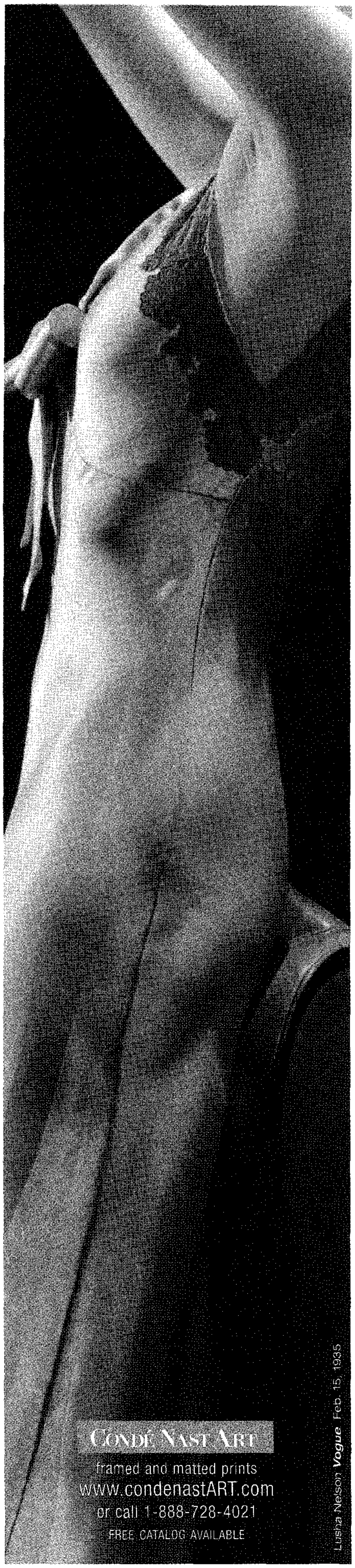
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one point, as Erick is prying Sophie off of himself, he compares her clinging limbs to the suctioned arms of a starfish.) Finally, Sophie abandons the White Russian cause and defects to the Red Army. Soon afterward, her division is captured by Erick and his men. In a military execution, he shoots her—in the face.

This was Yourcenar's most autobiographical novel, which doesn't mean that it's easy to figure out, in real-life terms, who shot whom. Roughly, one can say that Fraigneau killed Yourcenar by not loving her, and now—as the title of the book, with its pun on Frick's name, tells us—she's going to kill him, or her passion for him. Soon after "Coup de Grâce" came out, in 1939, Yourcenar returned to the United States, where for the next forty years Frick would be her companion, her translator, her household manager, and her shield against the world—possibly the most complete literary wife in the annals of art.

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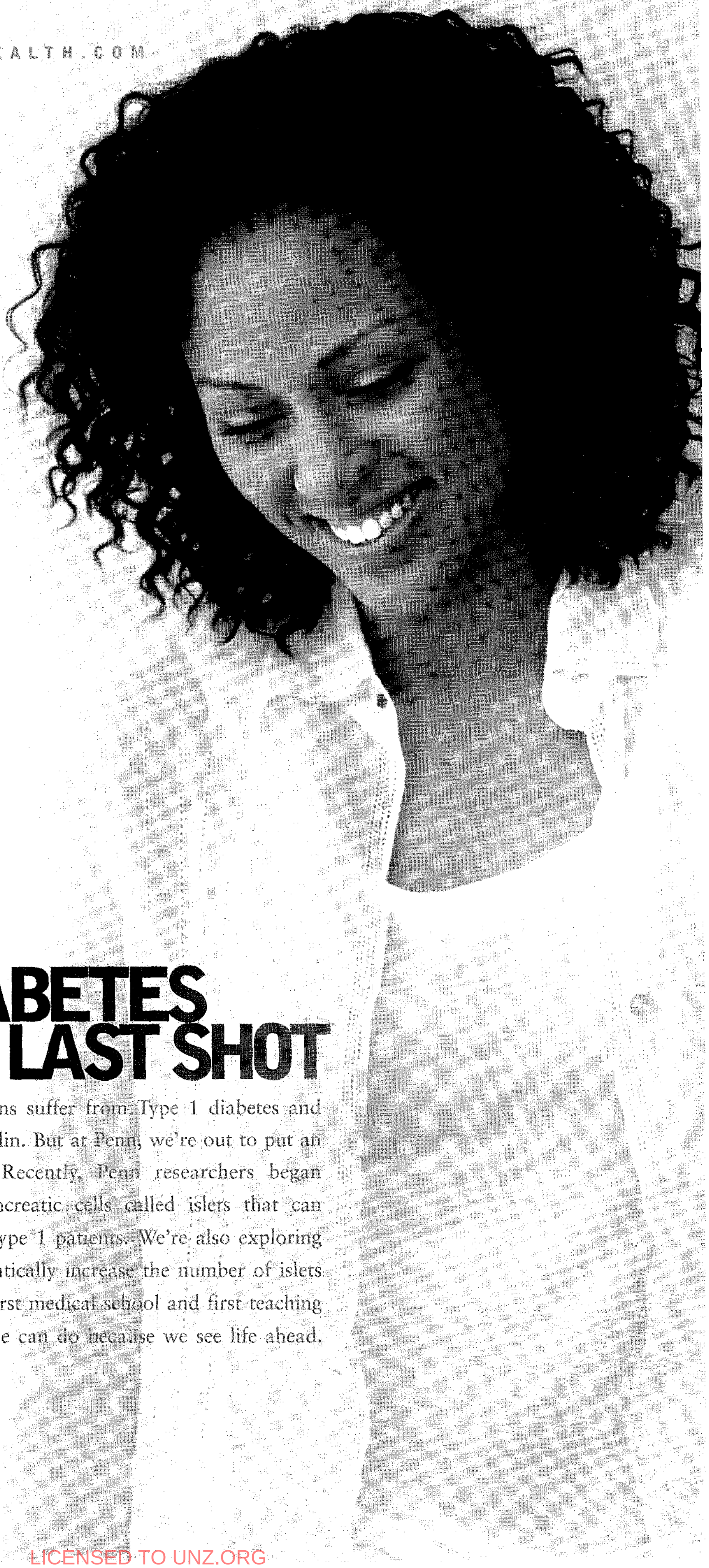
As Yourcenar explained it later, she had planned only to try out another winter with Grace, but the Second World War intervened, and by the time it was over she had decided to stay. (She became an American citizen in 1947.) When she was old, she said that her passion for Grace exhausted itself after two years. But Grace's passion lasted, and perhaps Yourcenar could not turn her back on that, or on the domestic comforts it provided. But there was another reason for not returning to her life in France. Its bottom, her literary career, had dropped out. Horribly, mysteriously, Yourcenar stopped writing when she arrived in the United States. For more than a decade, she published almost nothing. She and Grace lived mainly in Hartford, to be near Grace's work, first at Hartford Junior College, then at Connecticut College. Soon Yourcenar, too, began teaching, commuting to Sarah Lawrence, just outside New York City, where she gave courses in French and Italian. By all accounts, she was despondent. She had died to herself.

Before she left Europe, Yourcenar had deposited a trunk in storage at a hotel in Lausanne. She had been trying for years to get it back, and one day in 1949 it arrived. Opening it, she looked first for some valuables, but they had vanished. All that was left was a bunch of old papers. She pulled her chair up to the fireplace and started pitching things in. Then she came upon the drafts of a novel about Hadrian that she had begun when she was twenty-one and had later put aside. At the sight of those pages, she said, her mind more or less exploded. It is hard to understand how she managed to produce "Memoirs of Hadrian" in two years. In a bibliographical note appended to the novel, it takes her seventeen pages to list the sources she consulted (mostly at Yale) in order to make her account factually correct: ancient texts by the score; histories in English, French, and German; treatises on archeology, on numismatics. Then, there was the matter of writing the book, but she said that she composed it in a state of "controlled delirium." She recalled a train trip she took at the time:

> Closed inside my compartment as if in a cubicle of some Egyptian tomb, I worked late into the night between New York and Chicago; then all the next day, in the restaurant of a Chicago station where I awaited a train blocked by storms and snow; then again until dawn, alone in the observation car of a Santa Fe limited, surrounded by black spurs of the Colorado mountains, and by the eternal pattern of the stars. Thus were written at a single impulsion the passages on food, love, sleep, and the knowledge of men. I can hardly recall a day spent with more ardor, or more lucid nights.

Clearly, she was simply ready to write this novel, as she had not been at twenty-one. She herself said that the crux was time: "There are books which one should not attempt before having passed the age of forty." She was forty-five when she went back to Hadrian.

As the book opens, Hadrian is sixty, and dying. His life, he says, seems to him "a shapeless mass," but in this memoir, written as a letter to his adopted grandson, Marcus Aurelius, he will try to make some sense of it. The son of a Roman official, he grows up on a dusty estate in his native Spain. At sixteen, he is sent to study in Athens, and there he falls permanently in love with Greece, "the only culture," he says, "which has once for all separated itself from the monstrous, the shapeless, and the inert."



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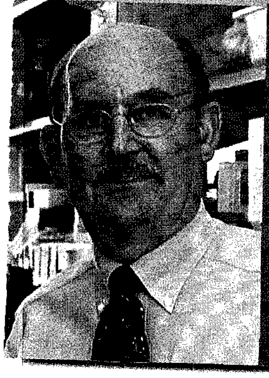

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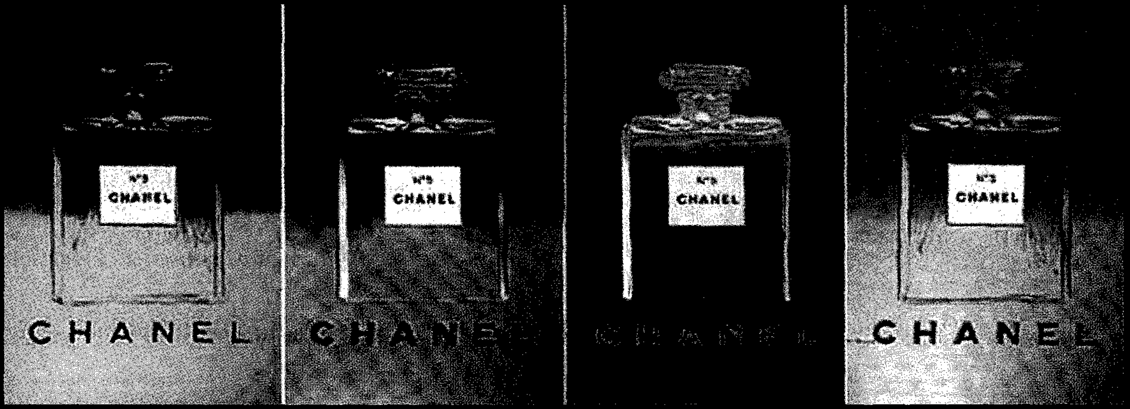
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Time, he discovers, is not just the present; some matters are eternal. But he is young and wild. In the wars in Dacia (Romania), his bravery greatly impresses the emperor, Trajan, who is his cousin and guardian. He recalls with exhilaration the "Dacian footsoldiers whom I crushed under my horse's hoofs." Later, in Rome, he shows himself equally skilled as an administrator and as a courtier. He is careful to get as drunk as everyone else at Trajan's parties. He longs to succeed Trajan as emperor.

There is a difficulty, however. Hadrian has come to hate Rome's policy of conquest. Instead of subduing other peoples, he thinks, why not make treaties with them and let them be, relying on the exchange of goods and ideas to spread Rome's laws? But he cannot voice these ideas. Trajan is an utterly convinced warmaker. Soon, this problem solves itself. Trajan dies, and Hadrian is made emperor, at the age of forty-one.

His sense of time now changes. The future is everything. He enacts a thousand reforms. He builds a bureaucracy. He outlaws forced labor, adjusts taxes, forbids execution by torture. Most important, he ends Rome's wars on its neighboring peoples. He envisions an empire not of uniformity but of multiplicity. (Today, we call this multiculturalism.) "The tattooed black, the hairy German, the slender Greek, and the heavy Oriental"—he wants them all, and just as they are, in their peculiar clothes and with their strange gods, except that, in keeping with Roman rule, they will clean their streets, give good weight, enforce the law. The new Rome of Hadrian's imagining was thus not so much an empire as a world. When the Greeks declared him a god, he thought—arrogantly, touchingly—that perhaps this wasn't excessive. The gods ruled the world in the name of right. So did he.

That was the high noon of his life. Then, at the age of forty-eight, he met a Greek boy, Antinous, aged thirteen or fourteen, and for the first time in his life he fell headlong in love. Antinous was tender and artless. After the hunt, Hadrian says, he "would cast off his dagger and belt of gold, scattering his arrows at random to roll with the dogs on the leather divans." Antinous, one suspects, was just the sort of blank little beauty (he only wanted to hunt; he never managed to learn Latin) that brilliance sometimes fastens on when it is tired of being brilliant. In any case, Hadrian, after seven years of midnight toil, found this patch of sunshine and was carried to mystic heights. He describes a "fire festival" his people staged in his honor:

> I watched Rome ablaze. Those festive bonfires were surely as brilliant as the disastrous conflagrations lighted by Nero; they were almost as terrifying, too. Rome the crucible, but also the furnace, the boiling metal, the hammer, and the anvil as well, visible proof of the changes and repetitions of history, one place in the world where man will have most passionately lived. . . . These millions of lives past, present, and future, these structures newly arisen from ancient edifices and followed themselves by structures yet to be born, seemed to me to succeed each other in time like waves; by chance it was at my feet that night that this great surf swept to shore. . . . The massive reef in the distance, perceptible in the dark, that gigantic base of my tomb so newly begun on the banks of the Tiber, suggested to me no regret at the moment, no terror nor vain meditation upon the brevity of life.

He is ecstatic, prophetic—the master of time.

Time soon reminds him who the master is. Hadrian was a great sensualist, and whereas, for a while, he was happy to spend his nights with Antinous alone, he eventually drew the boy into more complicated revels, including women. Antinous, by then nineteen, may have sensed what time would do to his position with Hadrian. One night in Alexandria, he came to Hadrian in a robe "sheer as the skin of a fruit." The next morning, he drowned himself in the Nile. Hadrian was shattered.

One last catastrophe awaited him. His idea that all of Rome's peoples, while following their own customs, would nevertheless recognize Rome as an overarching authority was not endorsed by everyone, notably the Jews. Hadrian couldn't understand the Jews: their insistence that their god was the only god, their barbarous custom of circumcision. He finally banned circumcision, and this, probably with other factors, provoked an insurrection. It took Hadrian and his army three years to put down the revolt, which they did savagely. Jerusalem was destroyed; the rabbis were executed; the rebels were sold into slavery. "Judea was struck from the map," Hadrian writes. That was the beginning of his death. Though he was the one who did it, it broke his

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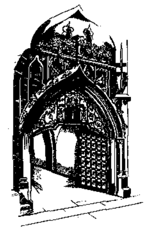

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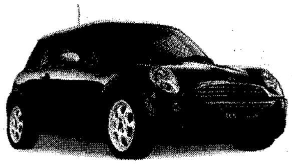

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continued...

heart. His policy of peace lay in the dust.

Of all Yourcenar's characters, Hadrian is the most admirable. He took everything in, liked everything: men, women, war, peace, Greece, Rome. He read endlessly. (Yourcenar reconstructed his library.) And he made combinations, compromises, with a goal of partial virtue, partial justice. He thought slavery was all right, but he outlawed the sale of slaves to gladiatorial schools. He accepted that women were inferior, but he gave them the right to inherit and bequeath property. He thought that men were no more prone to evil than to good, and that if he could induce them to try the good they might get in the habit. His mind was as large as his empire.

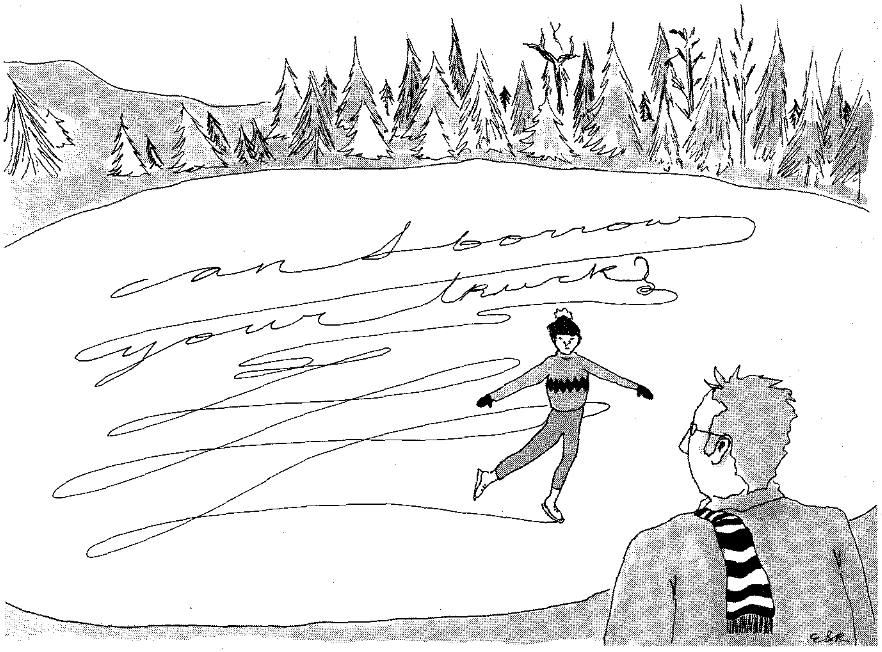
What would become of that empire after his death? This is the question that torments his last years. Near the end, he finds a bitter peace:

> Life is atrocious, we know. But precisely because I expect little of the human condition, man's periods of felicity, his partial progress, his efforts to begin over again and to continue, all seem to me like so many prodigies which nearly compensate for the monstrous mass of ills and defeats, of indifference and error. Catastrophe and ruin will come; disorder will triumph, but order will too, from time to time. . . . Some few men will think and work and feel as we have done, and I venture to count upon such continuators, placed irregularly throughout the centuries, and upon this kind of intermittent immortality.

One token of that immortality is "Memoirs of Hadrian." No other document takes us so deeply into the pre-Christian mind. This act of time-travel is part of what Yourcenar meant when she said one had to be forty in order to attempt certain books. Younger than that, this exemplary Judeo-Christian writer—who was a committed pacifist—could not have achieved the self-suppression required to describe her hero's joy as he trampled the Dacian foot soldiers. Age gave her more than objectivity, however. She says in an afterword to the novel that in order to appreciate Hadrian's struggle with time—the reversals, the accidents—she had to undergo the same struggles, among which her ten-year writing block no doubt figured heavily in her mind. "Hadrian" can be seen as her solution, the same one offered by Proust, whose work she loved. Art redeems us from time: in Hadrian's case, by shaping his life into a meaningful curve (ambition to mastery to exaltation to disaster to reconciliation); in Yourcenar's case, by enabling her to do that shaping, and in the process to write her first great novel, to save her own life.

But the salvation is not limited to the superstructure. It goes down to the diction, the grammar. In "Hadrian," Yourcenar gathers not just the round-cheeked boys and the fire festivals but also the less glamorous materials—the tax abatements, the judicial reforms—into sentences that throb and glow like rising suns. This is more than beauty; it's morals. If, to Hadrian and to Yourcenar, their lives seemed crazy or dull or just plain obliterated, these magnificent Latinate constructions, with their main clauses and their subordinate clauses—that is, with distinctions, with judgment—say the opposite.

"Hadrian" was Yourcenar's first big success—it made her famous—and the momentum she generated for it lasted close to twenty years. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, she wrote some superb critical essays, several of them spinoffs from "Hadrian," and gathered them in her collection "The Dark Brain of Piranesi and Other Essays" (1962). One striking feature of this book, and of her later critical writings, too, is the extent of her learning. Continuing the practice of her childhood, she read almost everything she could lay her hands on, and when she finished a book she liked, she would turn back to page 1 and read it over again. She went from Western literature to Asian literature. She taught herself new languages: a lot of Japanese, some German, Spanish, Portuguese, and modern Greek. This studiousness is reflected in her criticism. There seems to be almost nothing she doesn't feel she can write about: Cavafy, Mishima, Selma Lagerlöf, Michelangelo, the Venerable Bede, plus some people we haven't heard of but whom she is rescuing for us. Of the major novelists of the twentieth century, including Joyce, she was probably the most erudite. The point of her critical writings, though, is not their show of knowledge. As with "Hadrian," it is penetration—historical, moral—and the subject, again, is often time. In "The Dark Brain of Piranesi," the best of her essays—it is one of the most profound critical studies of our period—we learn what the great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eighteenth-century draftsman, trailblazing for Yourcenar in his thousand-odd etchings of the ruins of Rome, thought about time's action on the supposedly eternal city.

These were sidelines, though. Yourcenar's main project in the nineteen-sixties was her next novel, "The Abyss." The tone of this book is very different from that of "Hadrian." When an interviewer raised that point with her, she asked him to consider the events intervening between the two novels. When "Hadrian" was written, the war had just ended, and the United Nations had been established. There seemed to be some hope for the world. Then came a series of disasters. She listed them briefly: "Suez, Budapest, Algeria." (She might have added the Vietnam War, which sickened her. She went to sit-ins, carried placards.) If reading "Hadrian" is like gazing on white marble, reading "The Abyss" is like breaking open a clod of earth and finding strange, dark things: glints and bones and bugs, slimes and roots, sulfur and verdigris. Flanders in the sixteenth century was a pit of violence—secular wars, religious wars, peasant revolts. All this is in the book, together with the explosion of ideas that occurred at that time: the Reformation, the discovery of new worlds, the birth of modern science, the beginnings of industrialization. The hero of "The Abyss," and the representative of those new ideas, is Zeno, the illegitimate son of a rich banking family, who leaves home at the age of twenty to find truth. He becomes a priest, a physician, an alchemist, a philosopher. He writes books, and they are seized by the authorities. He travels to North Africa, to Sweden, to the courts of the East, and often has to leave quickly, with the police on his tail. Finally, he is captured, and condemned to be burned at the stake. On his last night, he cuts opens his veins and dies in his prison cell.

"The Abyss" is not a warm book. For one thing, it sometimes imitates Renaissance literary forms—the love lyric, the picaresque novel—and, while this true-to-period writing worked well in "Hadrian," in "The Abyss" it has a distancing effect, in the postmodern way. Furthermore, the story has very few good people in it. Zeno himself is not altogether sympathetic. The novel's excitement lies in the vividness of the world Yourcenar calls up: the reeking taverns, the lecherous monks, the smell of honey cakes and eel pie, and of festering bodies, felled by plague. Then there are the visions that fill Zeno's expanding mind. Here is what he sees as he is dying. Night has fallen:

> But this darkness, different from what the eyes see, quivered with colors issuing, as it were, from the very absence of color: black

...continued

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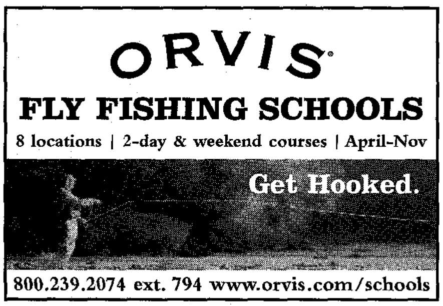
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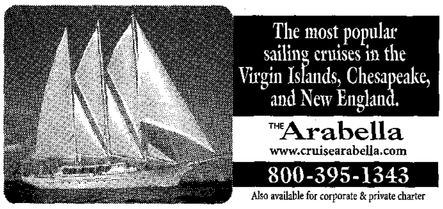
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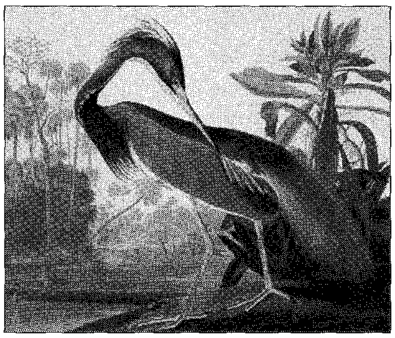

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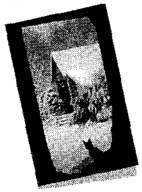

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turned to livid green, and then to pure white; that pure, pale white was transmuted into a red gold, although the original blackness remained, just as the fires of the stars and the northern lights pulsate in what is, notwithstanding, total night. For an instant which seemed to him eternal, a globe of scarlet palpitated within him, or perhaps outside him, bleeding on the sea. Like the summer sun in polar regions, that burning sphere seemed to hesitate, ready to descend one degree toward the nadir; but then, with an almost imperceptible bound upward, it began to ascend toward the zenith, to be finally absorbed in a blinding daylight which was, at the same time, night.

Yourcenar often voiced the conviction that her characters actually existed, and lived with her, but there is no character she felt closer to than Zeno. He was a brother to her, as she put it. When she couldn't sleep, she would hold out a hand to him. Once, weirdly, she recalled going to a bakery and leaving Zeno there; she had to go back and get him, she said. In view of this attachment, the stern and furtive character that she gave to Zeno seems puzzling. Perhaps it was a defense against too great a love for him. Or, more simply, one might say that Zeno was Yourcenar's tribute to one part of herself, her love of knowledge, and that she made the tribute more pointed by cutting the other parts away. She said she expected "The Abyss" to be read by about ten people. Instead, like "Hadrian," it was a big success.

In the nineteen-forties, Yourcenar and Frick discovered Mount Desert Island, a starkly gorgeous spot. In 1950, they bought an old frame house there, and soon they had quit their jobs and settled in. They called the house Petite Plaisance, little pleasure. Petite Plaisance is now a museum dedicated to Yourcenar. I visited it under the guidance of its director, Joan E. Howard, who, apart from being a Yourcenar scholar, was a friend of the writer's. The house is a bright, cozy place with eight small rooms jumbled together and filled with modest treasures—delft tiles, Chinese figurines, photographs of Yourcenar's and Frick's dogs. The most striking feature of the house is the library, which stretches from floor to ceiling and from room to room: Asian literature in the parlor, Greek and Roman in the study, seventeenth and eighteenth century in the foyer, early nineteenth century in Frick's bedroom, later nineteenth century in the guest rooms, twentieth century in Yourcenar's room. The place looks like the Bibliothèque Nationale crammed into a New England farmhouse. In the study, there is a large custom-made table with two typewriters opposite each other. As Yourcenar wrote her novels, and Frick translated them, they sat face to face, a few feet apart.

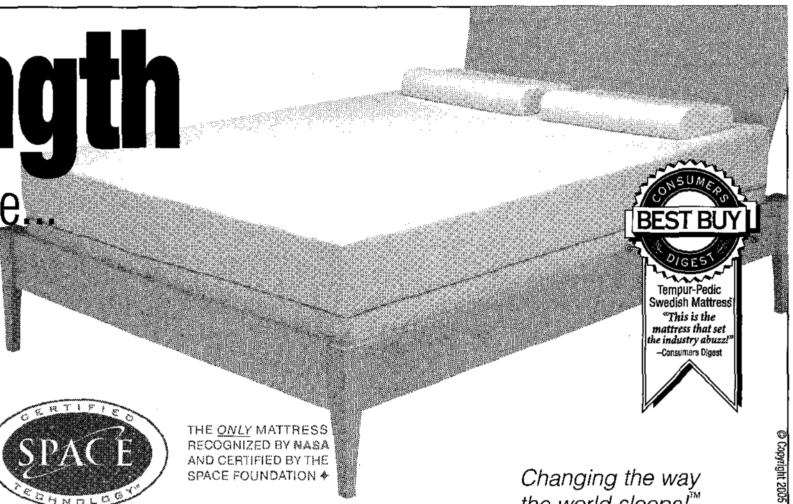
This they did for almost thirty years. After "The Abyss," Yourcenar's most important project was a three-volume biography of her family—basically, it is another historical novel—with the overall title "Le Labyrinthe du Monde." These three books have wonderful parts, but that's what they are: parts. Yourcenar, it seems, had finally tired of *constructing* her books. She also let herself rant. She was a longtime activist for environmentalism and animal protection, and in "The Labyrinth" we hear a lot about those causes.

It was while Yourcenar was writing "The Labyrinth" that she was elected to the Académie Française, an event that was heavily covered in the international press. (The society had existed for three hundred and forty-six years without including a female in its ranks, and many of the members—Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example—opposed any change in this policy.) At that point, Yourcenar had published almost a score of books (plus translations of other writers' work) in French, but only three of them, "Coup de Grâce," "Memoirs of Hadrian," and "The Abyss," had been brought out in English. Now her publishers got busy, and translations of her earlier work appeared in fast succession. Yourcenar wasn't troubled by the possibility that these volumes might not equal the products of her middle period. She had an odd view of her writing. Everything having come to her when she was young, she regarded it all, somehow, as one work, which she simply carried forward year by year. So she happily endorsed the translation and republication of her early books, many of which she now extensively revised. But no amount of revision could bring this material up to the level of "Hadrian" or "The Abyss," and that fact, together with the slackly composed "Labyrinth," left a number of reviewers with a problem. How could they say that this eminent, and also politically attractive, figure—this unbothered bisexual, this breacher of the walls of the Académie—had written a book that was not of the first rank? Some couldn't, and found the phrases they needed to lay another bouquet at her feet. Others, scornful of such politesse and, in the case of some New Wave types, unimpressed by marmoreal prose, asked what the big deal was about Yourcenar.

Her last years were strange. In 1958, Frick had been found to have cancer, and she fought it for twenty years. This put a terrible pressure on the household. Yourcenar had a mania for travel. If she didn't mind the isolation of Mount Desert Island, that was because, under normal circumstances, she was there only half the year. The rest of the time, she and Frick were in Europe or elsewhere. But as Frick got sicker they couldn't leave. For almost a decade, they were stuck year-round in that little house, as Grace, more and more slowly, translated "The Abyss" and Yourcenar went stir-crazy. Their relationship suffered. Frick died in 1979, and within three months Yourcenar had left Maine.

In the lives of aging divas, it sometimes happens that a young man—often impecunious, often homosexual—walks through the door saying how wonderful Madame is, and how the people around her don't fully appreciate that. In 1978, a year before Frick's death, Petite Plaisance was visited by a French television crew that included a young American photographer, Jerry Wilson, who was the director's assistant. Yourcenar was seventy-four, Wilson was twenty-nine, and he became the last love of her life. Most of her friends disapproved; Wilson didn't like them, either. ("He hated me," Joan Howard said to me, "and I came to hate him, too.") Yourcenar didn't care. She travelled with Wilson to Europe, to Asia, to Africa. At times, she thought of herself as Hadrian and Wilson as Antinous. The relationship may even have been consummated, or so say some of Wilson's friends. Wilson drank heavily, and he sometimes hit her. Still, in her mind, it was worth it. Wilson died of AIDS in 1986. Yourcenar grieved horribly, and then, two months later, she was back on the road, this time with one of his friends.

Like Hadrian, she had her burial plot prepared, next to Frick's, in a cemetery near Petite Plaisance. Indeed, the headstone was carved, lacking only the date of death. She must have known that her career was over; if not, she would have stayed home and worked on the last volume of "The Labyrinth," which she never finished. In 1987, having packed to leave for Europe again, she suffered a stroke and was taken to the hospital, where she became delirious. Soon afterward, when her friend Yannick Guillou, who oversaw her work at Éditions Gallimard, arrived and spoke to her in her native language—according to Savigneau, the only thing in the world that she loved without reservation—he said that "an expression as if of relief spread over her face, almost a look of happiness." That night, there was a date to inscribe on her tombstone. ♦



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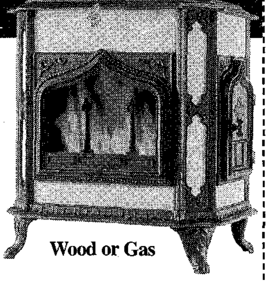

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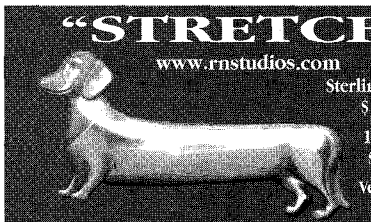

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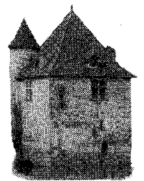

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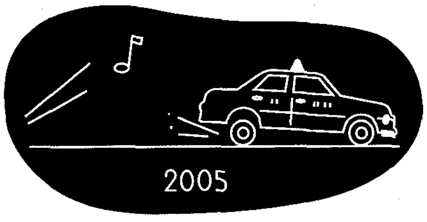
BRIEFLY NOTED

Distant Star, *by Roberto Bolaño, translated from the Spanish by Chris Andrews (New Directions; $14.95).* "The melancholy folklore of exile" pervades this novel, which describes the divergent paths of three young Chilean poets around the time of Pinochet's coup. At university, the unnamed narrator and his friend are fascinated by a mysterious new member of their poetry workshop. Alberto Ruiz-Tagle is "serious, well mannered, a clear thinker," but his poems seem false, as if his true work were yet to be revealed. It becomes apparent that this is literally the case when Allende's government falls: as an Air Force officer for the new regime, he becomes famous for writing nationalist slogans in the sky. (The left-wing narrator, now in jail, reads them from his prison yard.) Bolaño's spare prose lends his narrator's account a chilly precision—as if the detachment of his former classmate had become his country's, and his own.

The Chrysanthemum Palace, *by Bruce Wagner (Simon & Schuster; $23).* On the set of a schlocky TV space opera called "Starwatch," three children of wealthy and talented parents struggle to attain success of their own. The narrator, Bertie, is the son of the show's creator, and his current acting job is the nadir in a career of ever-shrinking ambition. His companions are Clea, the pill-popping daughter of a sexy actress who died young, and Thad, who is plagued by a personality disorder and the outsized legend of his father, an award-winning author. Suffering in the shadow of parental fame is a familiar trope of tabloid pathos, and the parents here are predictably malevolent. This slender novel lacks the kaleidoscopic frenzy of Wagner's "cell-phone" trilogy, and its more limited range gives his relentlessly up-to-the-minute pop-trivia references a somewhat airless feel. Still, his ability to eviscerate the absurdities of Hollywood, while occasionally hinting at its basic humanity, remains undiminished.

My Father's Rifle, *by Hiner Saleem, translated from the French by Catherine Temerson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $17).* Saleem, the son of a Kurdish guerrilla, narrates his harrowing memoir of his family's experiences in Iraq during the nineteen-sixties and seventies from the naïve perspective of his childhood self. At one point, the family, demoralized by the murder of relatives and the destruction of their home by collaborators, flee to Iran. Later, faced with a choice between repatriation or extermination, they return and are officially labelled *aïdoun*—meaning "fallen back into line." At school, Saleem attends classes taught in a language he doesn't understand (Arabic) and witnesses his young niece die when a doctor refuses to treat a "terrorist's daughter." At eighteen, Saleem concludes that war will never advance the Kurdish cause, and he leaves his family and the country he loves.

Postcards from the Brain Museum, *by Brian Burrell (Broadway; $24.95).* Franz Josef Gall's invention of phrenology, in the early eighteen-hundreds, marked the start of the scientific community's lasting obsession with dissecting and measuring the human brain. It seemed reasonable that the brains of exceptional people—whether geniuses or criminals—must share common physical traits that fostered those respective traits, and so scientists obtained and preserved exceptional brains for postmortem study. The brains of Whitman, Einstein, Lenin, and Charles Guiteau (the assassin of President Garfield) were all recruited for the cause. Several brain collections survive, and Burrell has made a tour of them. He nimbly encompasses science, philosophy, and social history to create an astute and sympathetic history of a scientific cul-de-sac. His dismissal of much contemporary brain science, however—in a chapter called "The New Phrenologists"—smacks of argumentative overreach.



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OSMOSIS

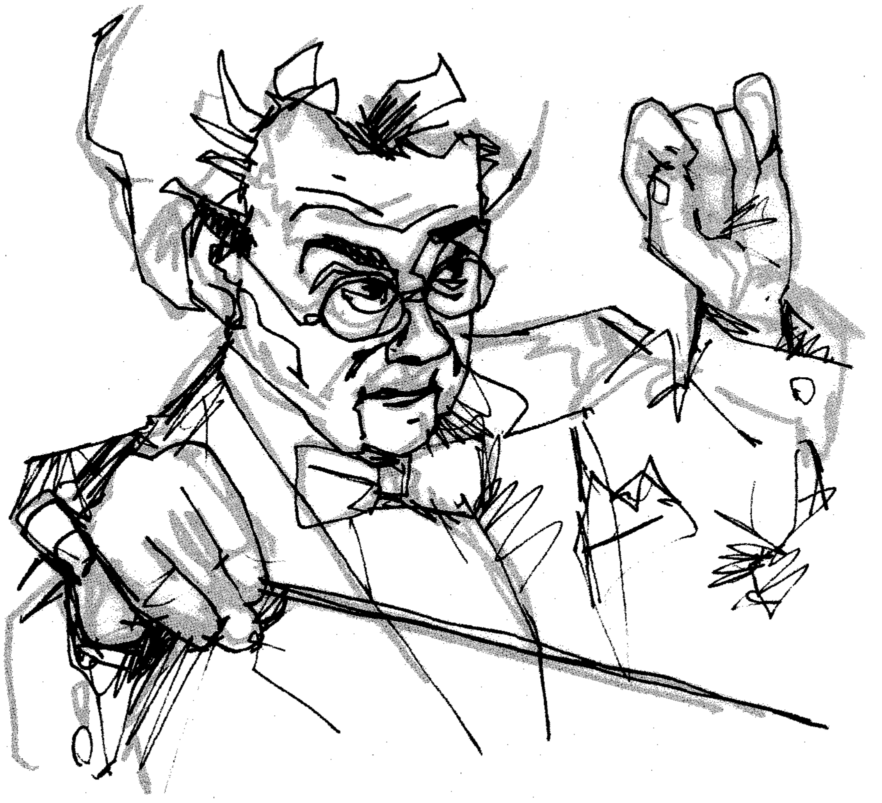
Osmo Vänskä, the latest Finnish phenomenon.

BY ALEX ROSS

On a recent night in Minneapolis, as the temperature plunged toward sixteen below zero, an unlikely midwinter carnival took place in Orchestra Hall. The Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä, who became the music director of the Minnesota Orchestra in 2003, had decided to present a symphony by his countryman Kalevi Aho, and the orchestra chose to spotlight rather than hush up this contemporary intrusion into the gated community of "great composers." A folk ensemble sang Finnish songs in the lobby. Finnish arts and crafts were for sale alongside characteristic pastries, including homemade snickerdoodles, which I enjoyed too much to question whether they were really Finnish. The hubbub drew in curious passersby. A couple walked up to the ticket window and asked, "What kinda show ya got tonight?" The cashier answered, "We've got some Mozart and some"—she paused—"Aho." The couple blanched. "But Osmo is here," she added. That closed the deal.

Vänskä is hugely popular in Minnesota, and this concert showed why. First came a richly voiced "Magic Flute" Overture. Then Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 27, with Emanuel Ax as the crisp, heartfelt soloist. Finally, the Aho—the composer's Seventh Symphony, subtitled "Insect Symphony." Each movement depicts a different insect species, with a human allegory that's easily detectable. Butterflies dance an insouciant foxtrot and tango; bohemian dung beetles lament lost time; worker ants march in totalitarian lockstep. The sequence of moods and styles seemed haphazard at first, but the last two movements delivered such a psychic double whammy—the Fascistic march followed by a desperately lovely lullaby for cello (dayflies)—that the structure felt secure. The orchestra played with the kind of furious finesse that every composer prays for. The audience responded with a yelling ovation. No one was talking about Mozart on the way out.

In the past few years, Vänskä has gone from relative obscurity to the front ranks of conductors. In city after city, he has shaken orchestras out of their routines and audiences out of their slumbers. A clarinettist by training, he started out in 1985 as the principal guest conductor of the Lahti Symphony—named for its home city, in the south of Finland. Thanks to a series of Sibelius recordings on the BIS label, word spread that Vänskä had somehow put together a first-class ensemble in a town of a hundred thousand people. In 1996, he appeared in front of a half-empty Carnegie Hall with the Iceland Symphony. Sibelius's Second was the main work, and by the end of the second movement that trusty warhorse had become a moody, fearsome beast. Of all the out-of-town-orchestra concerts I've heard at Carnegie, that one was the most thrilling.



Finland views classical music as a national pastime, not as an élite pursuit.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

In the last week of January, Vänskä brought the Lahti Symphony to Avery Fisher Hall. Sibelius's Second was again the main attraction, and again it rocked the house. Vänskä says that he aims for "passion and precision," and he is the rare conductor who achieves the latter without sacrificing the former. He is a stickler for detail, and can exasperate players. But his exactitude serves an expressive end: minute shadings of dynamics and tempo create a cinematic depth of field, before which grand gestures unfold. Passion is always on the surface: Vänskä loves extremes of emotion, such as Sibelius's spasms of sorrow and joy, and he holds nothing back.

Not content with his status as a genius Sibelius interpreter, Vänskä is now invading the mainstream repertory. He has undertaken a Beethoven cycle in Minnesota and is also recording the symphonies for BIS. The first installment, which will be in stores this month, pairs the Fourth and Fifth. There are no revolutionary interpretive departures, but the orchestra plays with startling, ear-cleansing vigor throughout, and the sound is as vivid as technology allows. Whether or not Vänskä's Beethoven replaces Karajan's in every home, Minnesotans will certainly embrace it, and they are the audience that counts. The future of music is local, not global. Every ensemble must justify itself to its community, because the global economy has no use for a symphony orchestra playing Beethoven or Aho or anything else. In this sense, Vänskä, an imperious but unpretentious conductor who delivers transcendent performances on an almost routine basis and rides a Yamaha 650 motorcycle in his spare time, is at the zenith of his profession.

The Lahti concert was the coda to a heavily Nordic month in New York. The bighearted Estonian-American conductor Neeme Järvi, who finishes his tenure at Detroit Symphony this spring and starts full time at the New Jersey Symphony next fall, presided over a "Northern Lights" festival at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Meanwhile, Järvi's son Paavo led the Cincinnati Symphony in an all-Nordic program at Carnegie; the Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes gave the première of a resonant dreamscape by the Danish composer Bent Sørensen; and the Finnish soprano Karita Mattila sang at the Met in "Katya Kabanova." There are new CDs by such living Finns as Aho, Aulis Sallinen, and Einojuhani Rautavaara. If I could use these names in Scrabble, I'd rule the board.

You don't need a degree in geopolitical musicology to understand why the Nordic countries have acquired such disproportionate dominance. They have paid for it fair and square. Finland, most notably, views music as a national pastime, not as an élite pursuit, and it has designed a music-education system that may be the best in the world. The country's avidity for classical music, and not just of the imported variety, is rooted in the singular phenomenon of Sibelius, who assisted in the forging of the Finnish nation, and whose personal style radically renewed musical language while maintaining a powerful hold on the average listener's imagination. The fact that Sibelius's face appeared on the hundred-markan bill encapsulates this synergy of the economic and the artistic.

Finnish composers long ago stopped imitating Sibelius, but they are still indirectly influenced by his sense of sonority and space. Vänskä and the Lahti recently recorded Rautavaara's Eighth Symphony—a not quite believable but immensely seductive geography of Romantic sound, in which long, songful, freely flowing phrases reach out for worlds that are long gone and perhaps never were. Sallinen, too, is up to Symphony No. 8, which the Cincinnati Symphony played at Carnegie. If Rautavaara is a dreamer, Sallinen is an ironist, an elegist, a dealer in lyric fragments. His Eighth is a shadowy, thinned-out landscape populated by a few sadly dancing figures.

At the New Jersey festival, the spotlight fell on the offbeat Nordic repertory that the elder Järvi has long made his specialty: works of Niels Gade, Rudolf Tobias, Johan Svendsen, and the near-great Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar. I can't endorse Järvi's claim that the Stenhammar First Piano Concerto is the "most beautiful piano concerto ever written"; I don't even think it's as good as the Stenhammar Second. But Järvi and the young Swedish virtuoso Per Tengstrand seized the piece as if it were great, and their conviction carried the day. Two other superb young soloists lit up the New Jersey programs. The seventeen-year-old prodigy Yujia Wang made lush, booming sounds in the Grieg Piano Concerto, and she also displayed an intelligent command of phrase and form. Pekka Kuusisto joyfully rejuvenated the Sibelius Violin Concerto, situating it somewhere between Bachian cogitation and rustic fiddling. Kuusisto had the added charm of being funny. When Joseph Horowitz, one of the organizers of "Northern Lights," commented in a pre-concert event that the Kalevala epic is to the Finns as the Nibelungenlied is to the Germans and the Edda to the Icelanders, Kuusisto chimed in, "And as ABBA lyrics are to the Swedes."

Finally, the New Jersey series introduced the young Estonian conductor Anu Tali, who guided Wang through the Grieg Concerto and then took on Sibelius's monumental Fifth Symphony. Tali is one of a number of women who are elbowing their way into the clammily masculine world of conducting. The sound of the orchestra remains uneven: the strings are consistently full and rich, the brass sometimes coarse. But, despite the horn and trombone mishaps, Tali had the orchestra playing with palpable force and warmth. It was a welcome contrast to the chilly brilliance that is often heard from visiting ensembles in New York. In a recessionary climate, when orchestras need to show why the music matters, passion outweighs precision. ♦

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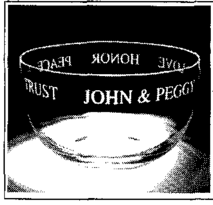

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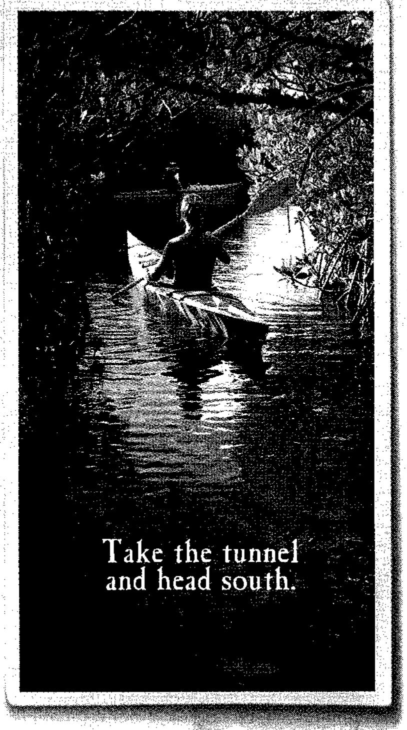

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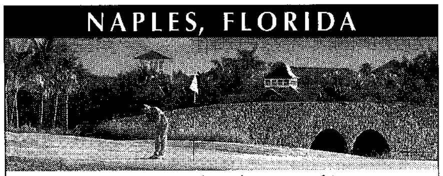

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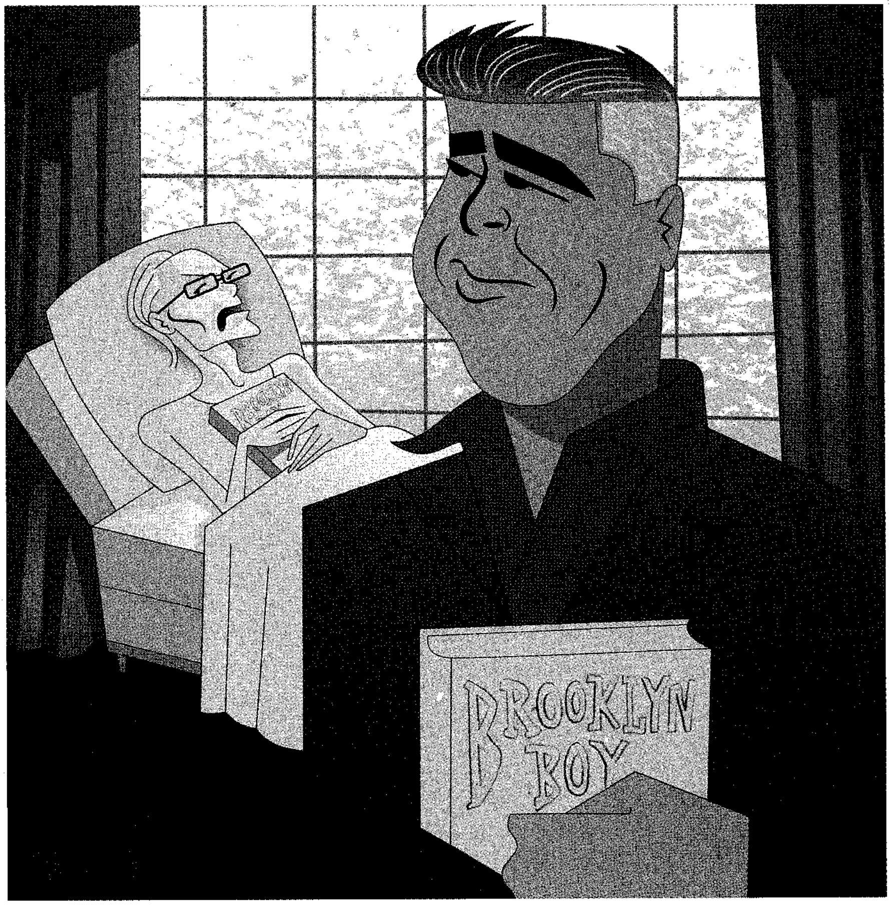
THE THEATRE

PRISONERS OF ENVY

Donald Margulies and David Rabe on the not-so-sweet smell of success.

BY JOHN LAHR



Allan Miller and Adam Arkin as abusive father and son in "Brooklyn Boy."

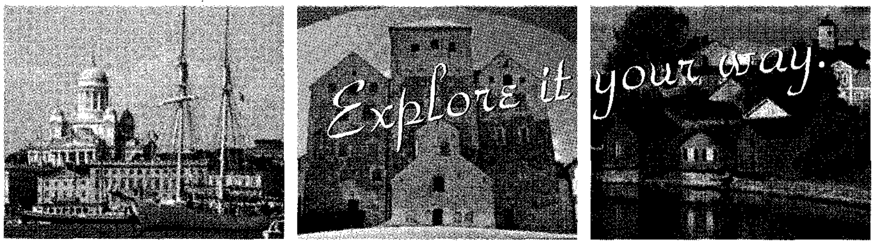
ROBERT RISKO

On the surface, Donald Margulies's new play, "Brooklyn Boy" (at the Biltmore, under the direction of Daniel Sullivan), is a rueful account of what passes on these shores for literary success; beneath that familiar terrain, however, it is an attempt to map a much murkier emotional landscape: the jealousy that such success inevitably inspires. This being a Broadway show, Margulies's portrait of envy's spoiling rage is served up with large dollops of humor and a pinch of reparation—Envy Lite. Nonetheless, his inquiry is not without fascination.

Here, Eric (Adam Arkin), a young literary lion—the eponymous Brooklyn boy of his best-seller's title—detours from his book tour to visit his dying father, Manny (the baleful Allan Miller), in the cancer ward of a Brooklyn hospital. Arriving with a copy of his new novel in hand, he proudly turns to the dedication page, which reads, "For my mother and my father." "Don't we get our names?" his father responds. "Couldn't you say 'For Phyllis and Manny Weiss?' . . . It would've given your mother, may she rest in peace, such *nakhess* to see her name in print. When do people like us ever get to do that? Huh? When we *die.*" Manny, who has spent his working life in Brooklyn selling Buster Brown shoes, isn't big on reading; he is, however, big on belittling. "I tried reading those *other* books of yours. Those *first* two," he says. " 'The Something-Something' and the other one, 'The . . .'?" His son reminds him that the novel was called "The Aerie" and that the word means a bird's nest. "Then why couldn't you call it 'The Bird's Nest'?" Manny says. "Something people could pronounce. No wonder nobody bought it; they didn't know how to ask for it." Eric's life is just beginning; his father's is ending. Manny's fury at this takes the shape of a constant drizzle of abuse. Eric's book has reached No. 11 on the *Times* best-seller list. "You mean there *is* an eleven? I thought it only went to ten," Manny says. He is a psychological terrorist, transmitting his own sense of impotence to others. In this sad, well-managed scene, Manny tramples all over his son's sense of accomplishment. By the time Eric leaves to continue his victory lap in Los Angeles, his depression is palpable.

Manny is not the only one torturing the newly famous author. "Brooklyn Boy" is a kind of anatomy of hostility. Arkin plays the long-suffering author like a bull bowed with banderillas. He tries to roll with the pain, but sometimes his eyes bulge, his head judders, and he explodes at his tormentor. Take, for instance, his old high-school friend, the nudge Ira Zimmer (Arye Gross), whom he runs into at the hospital and who tries to pressure him into rekindling a friendship that expired decades ago. Ira is certain that he's a character in Eric's novel. "I don't care how rich you get off of me, I just want to hear you say it. The guy is me!" he says. Ira has gone nowhere in life: he lives in his parents' house and has followed the line of least resistance into the family delicatessen business. He defends against his disappointment with Orthodox piety and studied bonhomie. And he exhibits one of the telltale signs of the envious: he masks his desire to steal Eric's success by claiming to have been robbed himself. "I've got a story," he jokes. "Only I'm gonna *charge* you for it this time." In one bewildered moment, as they argue about their different destinies, Ira blurts out, "What is it, a gene? A chemical? What is it you were born with that I wasn't? We were born three days apart! . . . Lived three blocks away. Saw each other every day, practically. Now look where *you* are and look where *I* am."

Invidious comparison is also what drives a heartbreaking wedge between Eric and his nervy estranged wife, Nina (the expert Polly Draper). Nina, who is a writer, too, feels filled with "the contagion of failure." Moreover, she is infertile. Her



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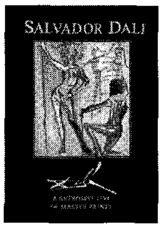
physical and imaginative barrenness—she hasn't published a story in six years—makes the differential between them too great. Intimacy is possible only between equals; Eric's success has irrevocably tipped the balance. "*Tell* me it hasn't occurred to you I'm not any good. Go on, tell me," she challenges him across her East Village kitchen table. "Do you *hate* me?" he asks her. The question catches her off guard. "What? No," she says, then turns her hatred on herself. "Whenever I see you . . . I'm reminded of all the things I failed at."

In Los Angeles, where Eric is developing the screenplay for his book, he is assailed by Alison (the droll Ari Graynor), a collegiate trophy hunter who wants to bed the great man while despising the source of his power. "No offense or anything, but fiction is like *so* over," she says, curling up next to him on his hotel bed. Margulies, who wrote a screenplay for his Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Dinner with Friends," takes pleasure in showing how the envy of the talentless is expressed in Hollywood—through a habitual attempt to sabotage meaning. "It's one thing to be Jewish in a *book*, and another to be Jewish in a *movie*," Eric's producer, Melanie Fine (Mimi Lieber), tells him, as she suggests lowering "the Jewish quotient" in his coming-of-age story. "Imagining Jews is much easier than actually seeing them." The coup de grâce for Eric's film career arrives in the form of a handsome, blond, surfer-type TV star, Tyler Shaw (the hilarious Kevin Isola), who wants to play Eric. "I have, like, such awe for writers," he says. He adds, "I always find my characters through my hair. Always. It's like once I get the right hair, I *become* them."

Although Margulies is expert at withholding information—Manny dies, we learn later, in the midst of the Hollywood fiasco—he isn't equally disciplined at withholding explanation. At the finale—a timid commercial gesture passing as psychological atonement—Manny's ghost materializes to shed light on his behavior. "You scared the shit out of me!" he says of his son's precocious intelligence. Emotional abuse was the firewall Manny erected between his toxic sense of inferiority and his son. "Simple men may not have the talent for words . . . but don't assume there's nothing going on behind the silence and the sarcasm," he says. "A kind of terror. That's all. Resentment. . . . Embarrassment. Shame." In Margulies's soft ending, Eric gets what he has always wanted from his father: an acknowledgment of his endeavor. "How do you sit down and build something out of words, something that wasn't there before?" Manny asks. "*I* could never do that. . . . Must be a great thing to be able to do." As the curtain falls, the secular Eric says Kaddish for his father—a perfect theatrical example of what Dr. Johnson called "the secret ambush of a specious prayer."

David Rabe's "Hurlyburly," written in 1984 and well revived by the New Group's deft, high-octane cast (at the Acorn, on Theatre Row), is some kind of great play—a wild, daring, mysterious brainstorm that channels the horror and hilarity of the chaotic household of two debauched TV casting directors in the Hollywood Hills. As the assembled wastrels stumble, snort, and screw through their days, explosions of paranoia and rage, of sexual and moral carelessness flare across the stage in wonderful, frenzied riffs of inspired vernacular. "I mean, basically we all know the M.O. out here is they take an interesting story, right?" the coked-up casting director Eddie (Ethan Hawke) explains to his sidekick, Phil (Bobby Cannavale), an ex-con and an aspiring actor. "So like every other whore in this town, myself included, you have to learn to lend your little dab of whatever truth you can scrounge up in yourself to this total, this systematic sham—so that the fucking viewer will be exonerated from ever having to confront directly the fact that he is spending his life face to face with total shit."

In a consumer society, the American sociologist Ivan Illich observed, "there are two kinds of slaves: the prisoners of addiction and the prisoners of envy." "Hurlyburly" brings together both constituencies. All the characters are conspicuously wasted. They have sunk to the bottom of their own emotional sea. Terminally distracted, unable to think, and, finally, even to find words for their feelings—"Rapateta, rapateta. Blah blah blah" is the play's mantra—they are lost not only to the world but to themselves. Their minds may be racing, but their souls are stuck in a hell of their own making. This spectacle of faithlessness, which is directed by Scott Elliott, is at once awful and beautiful. ♦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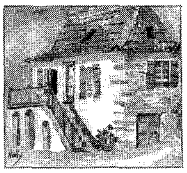
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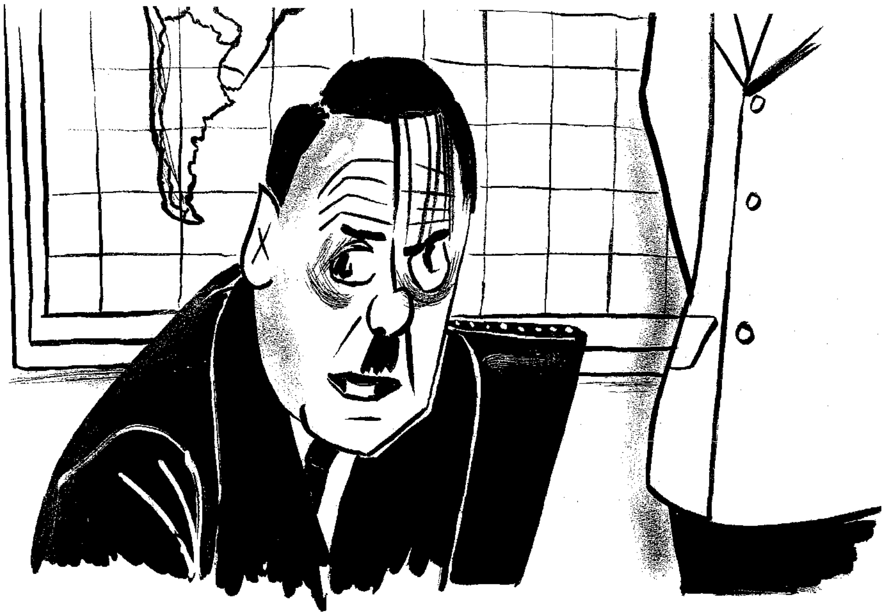
THE CURRENT CINEMA

BACK IN THE BUNKER

"Downfall."

BY DAVID DENBY

In the past, in such films as Wim Wenders' "The American Friend" and "Wings of Desire," the Swiss-German actor Bruno Ganz seemed a rather gentle and melancholy fellow. Soft as swans' feathers, Ganz caressed the viewer with a doleful gaze and a rounded baritone voice that turned even commonplace German phrases into soothing near-poetry. Ganz appeared to carry the weight of European cultivation on his back, not as a glory but as a burden of sensitivity, even anguish—one felt his attentiveness to the slightest breeze of anxiety or willfulness in the air around him. Given these impressions, the obvious initial response to Ganz's performance as Adolf Hitler in the Oscar-nominated German film "Downfall" is that it's nothing less than a staggering revelation of craft. Ganz, now sixty-three (seven years older than Hitler was when he died), is a sturdy five feet ten inches, but he looks shockingly small in this movie, even shrunken, like some golem or mythical dwarf—a would-be Siegfried who has collapsed into Alberich. Ganz's stooped, misshapen body supports what looks like a crudely carved wooden head (the flesh on his face is lumpy) surmounted by a slab of oily black hair. The time is late April, 1945; the final battle with the Red Army is raging in Berlin, and Hitler, living with his military aides and staff in a bunker under the Reich Chancellery, is in ghastly health; his body is so constricted that he has trouble walking—he might be a broken-down puppet consigned to occasional use in a travelling Bavarian circus.



Bruno Ganz plays Hitler in a German film about the final days of the Third Reich.

TOM BACHTELL

But then the puppet comes to life. When Hitler hears something that he doesn't like, energy rushes up in galvanic surges from Ganz's pelvis or spine or some other mysterious source of actorly strength. The dark head, slumped over a map, suddenly rises, the arms wave about wildly, and the voice erupts in that familiar deafening bawl. The rages are mesmerizing, appalling, borderline funny—oh, how everyone has betrayed poor Hitler—and somehow Ganz pulls them off without lunging all over the room; he explodes and implodes simultaneously, and then subsides and becomes even

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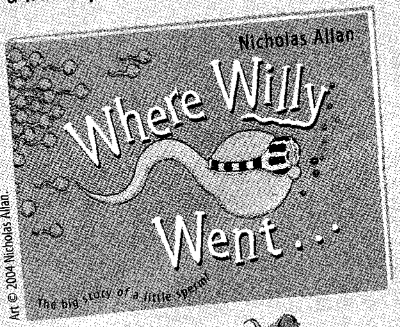
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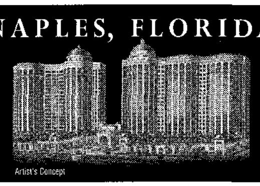

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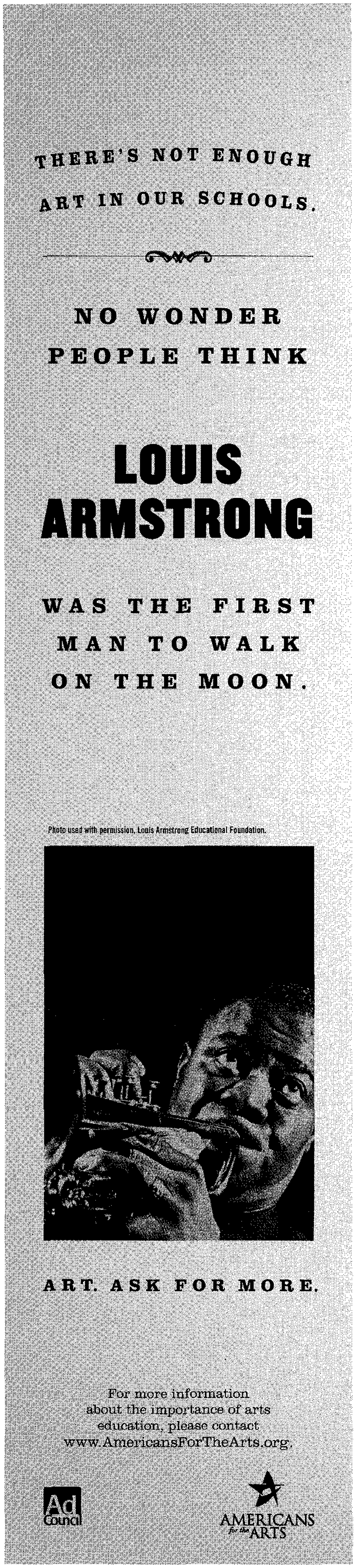
smaller. As a piece of acting, Ganz's work is not just astounding, it's actually rather moving. But I have doubts about the way his virtuosity has been put to use. By emphasizing the painfulness of Hitler's defeat Ganz has certainly carried out the stated ambition of the producer-writer Bernd Eichinger and the director Oliver Hirschbiegel—he has made the dictator into a plausible human being. Considered as biography, the achievement (if that's the right word) of "Downfall" is to insist that the monster was not invariably monstrous—that he was kind to his cook and his young female secretaries, loved his German shepherd, Blondi, and was surrounded by loyal subordinates. We get the point: Hitler was not a supernatural being; he was common clay raised to power by the desire of his followers. But is this observation a sufficient response to what Hitler actually did? "Downfall" is an expensive, full-scale re-creation of life in the bunker. Himmler, Goebbels, Speer—they are all here, the entire fascinating, loathsome crew of commanders, mad visionaries, and toadies (all brilliantly acted), but never has the Nazi era seemed so close to banality or, in an odd way, to reassurance.

A film made by Germans for Germans, "Downfall" is the latest installment in the project of "coming to terms with the past" which has been unrolling in Germany for half a century, and the movie, a big hit, has caused consternation and derision there. For instance, when "Downfall" opened, last fall, a few journalists in the Federal Republic wondered aloud whether the "human" treatment of Hitler might not inadvertently aid the neo-Nazi movement. But in his many rants in "Downfall" Hitler says that the German people do not deserve to survive, that they have failed him by losing the war and must perish—not exactly the sentiments, I should think, that would spark a recruitment drive. This Hitler may be human, but he's as utterly degraded a human being as has ever been shown on the screen, a man whose every impulse leads to annihilation. Eichinger and Hirschbiegel frequently take us up to the ruined streets above the bunker, where children, having volunteered for combat, are cut down by Soviet fire, and the few civilians eager to make peace get hanged as traitors by the remaining Nazi stalwarts. Hitler's will continues to operate even after he has lost his power. In imitation of that will, Goebbels' icy wife, Magda (Corinna Harfouch), poisons the six younger Goebbels children, one by one, because they are "too good" to grow up in a post-Nazi world. The children's death is unbelievably creepy: they are blond and cute, and they sing in unison for Uncle Adolf a few days before they die—it's as if the little Von Trapps had been silenced at last. That's a sick joke, perhaps, but you long to mock these solemn, murdering Nazi "idealists," female as well as male. The movie errs in treating even the most grotesquely sordid episodes as tragedy (accompanied by Purcell's most dignified music).

German liberals need not fear: this human Hitler is just as disgusting as the iconic one. Yet I feel a certain exasperation in writing a description of what is, finally, an extremely literal-minded production. The attempt to re-create Hitler in realistic terms has always been morally and imaginatively questionable, a compromise with the unspeakable, and it still is. The inadequacies don't vanish when one learns that the movie was based on first-rate research and an eyewitness report—"Inside Hitler's Bunker," by the historian Joachim Fest, perhaps the leading German expert on Hitler's life, and "Until the Final Hour," by Traudl Junge, who became one of Hitler's private secretaries at the age of twenty-two, and stayed with him to the end. She died in 2002, but was interviewed at length for the excellent documentary "Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary," which was completed just before her death. It's her voice that is heard in a kind of prologue to "Downfall," and it's her handsome, elderly face, in a borrowed excerpt from "Blind Spot," that is seen at the finish. In the rest of the movie, Junge appears as a lanky, beautiful young woman (played by Alexandra Maria Lara) who is overwhelmed by the cauldron of madness she finds herself in. Through her eyes, we see such weird bunker follies as the non-stop partying in one corner or another and the alternating periods of hysterical rage and paralyzed sloth. The secretary's astonished gaze is an attempt to anchor audience response, and many will want to believe the eighty-one-year-old Junge when she says that she cannot forgive herself for failing to find out what the Nazis were doing to the Jews during the war. She is one of the decent but lazy people who allowed common clay to become *der Führer*, and she tries to make an accounting.

Candor is admirable, but it's not heroism, and it's not art. Oliver Hirschbiegel moves the camera vigorously through the bunker (an enormous set built in Munich), and his staging of the mayhem on the streets above is frightening enough. But Hirschbiegel and Eichinger are naïve if they think that professional competence and humanist accountability are sufficient for this subject. Besides that, they are not really adding much that's new to the Hitler movie archives. The great German director G. W. Pabst looked inside the bunker in the intense, claustrophobic "The Last Ten Days" (1955); Alec Guinness roared his way through an Anglo-Italian version of the material from 1973; and in 1981 Anthony Hopkins did a made-for-TV movie, called "The Bunker." Why is Hitler so often shown at the end, rather than at an earlier, victorious moment? Obviously, his defeat is an emotional release: every decade or so, as in some primitive ritual, the dictator has to be hauled out of the grave, propped up, and slain again, just to make sure he's dead. It's an understandable impulse, but what new insights into Hitler are gained during this purgation of fear?

Working for the home audience, Eichinger and Hirschbiegel offer not insight but scraps of noble behavior. There are the stoical defenders of Berlin who persist in the face of certain defeat; the good S.S. doctor who refuses to be evacuated and takes care of the wounded (a much sanitized version of an actual S.S. doctor). The war's end is presented as a standard military defeat, and as the tragedy of a misguided regime, and not, as many of us would see it, as a liberation from complicity in a nightmare. Some of the officers commit suicide, which Hirschbiegel dramatizes as a grimly honorable act. But the Wehrmacht and the S.S. officers who remained in the inner circle as late as April, 1945, were not mere warriors; they were active, knowing participants in years of criminal behavior. Who cares about their honor? By adding pathos to the collapse of Nazism, the filmmakers have come close to nostalgia, and at times one longs for a coldly malicious ironist like Brecht or Fassbinder to come in and take over. One even wants a revival of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's "Our Hitler," from 1977, a seven-and-a half-hour extravaganza that combined surrealist shenanigans, circus acts, puppet shows, and didactic passages, all in an attempt to place Hitler within German history and sensibility. The movie was infuriating, but at least it didn't force the audience to engage in such inanities as freshly appraising Hitler's relation to his secretary, his cook, and his dog. ♦



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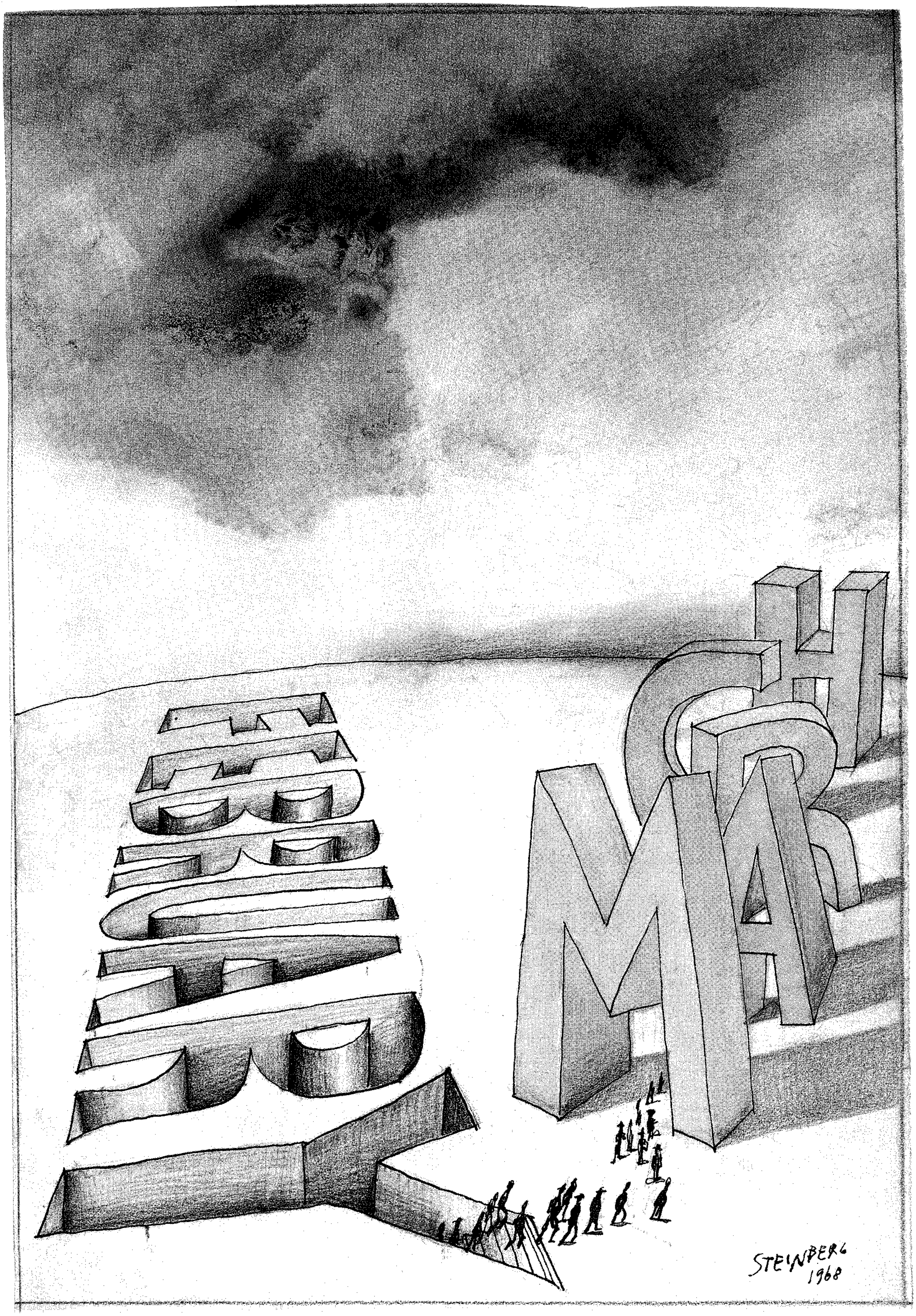
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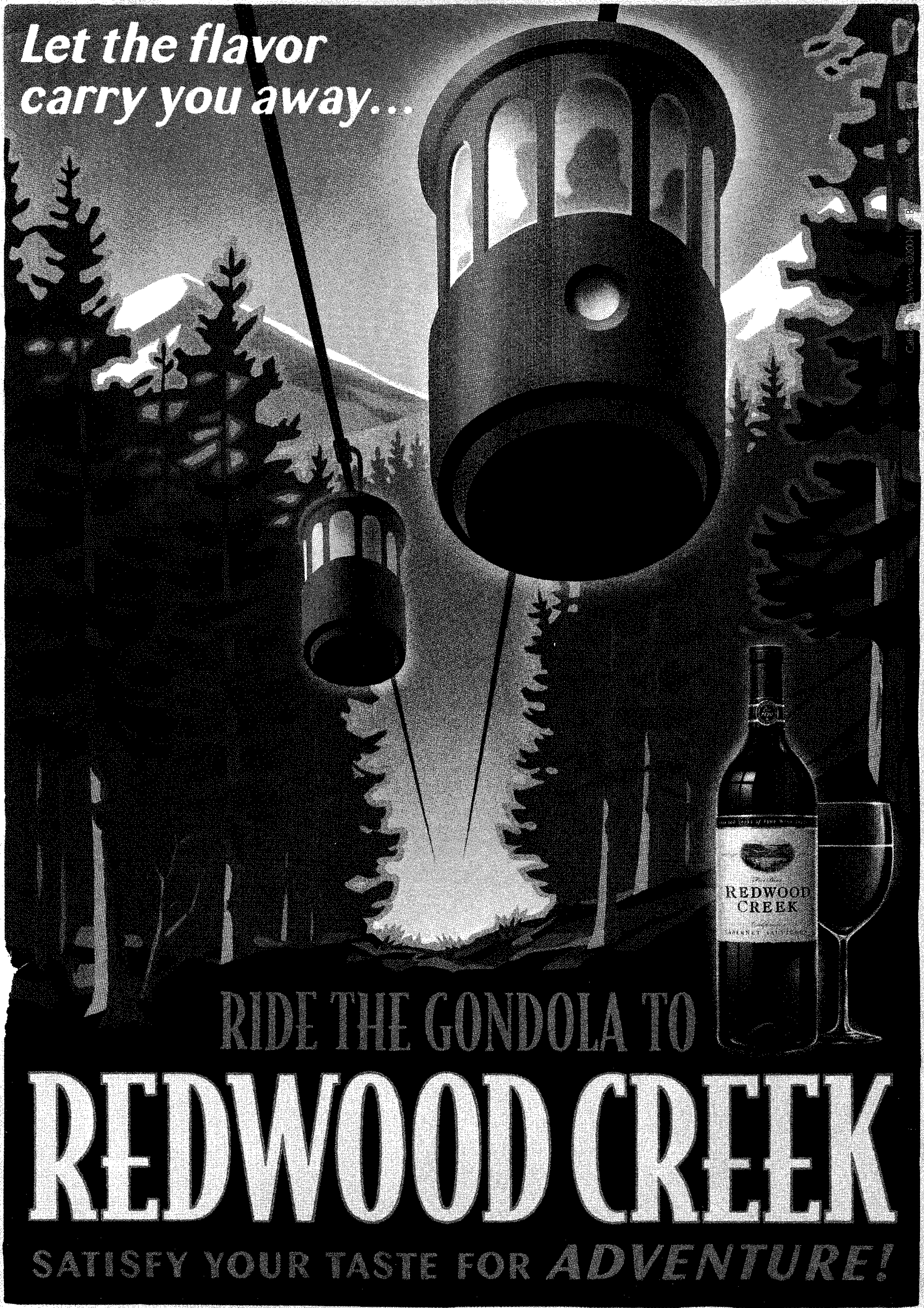
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